

TAKING MULTI-FORMAT GAMING TO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

TOTAL CONTROL

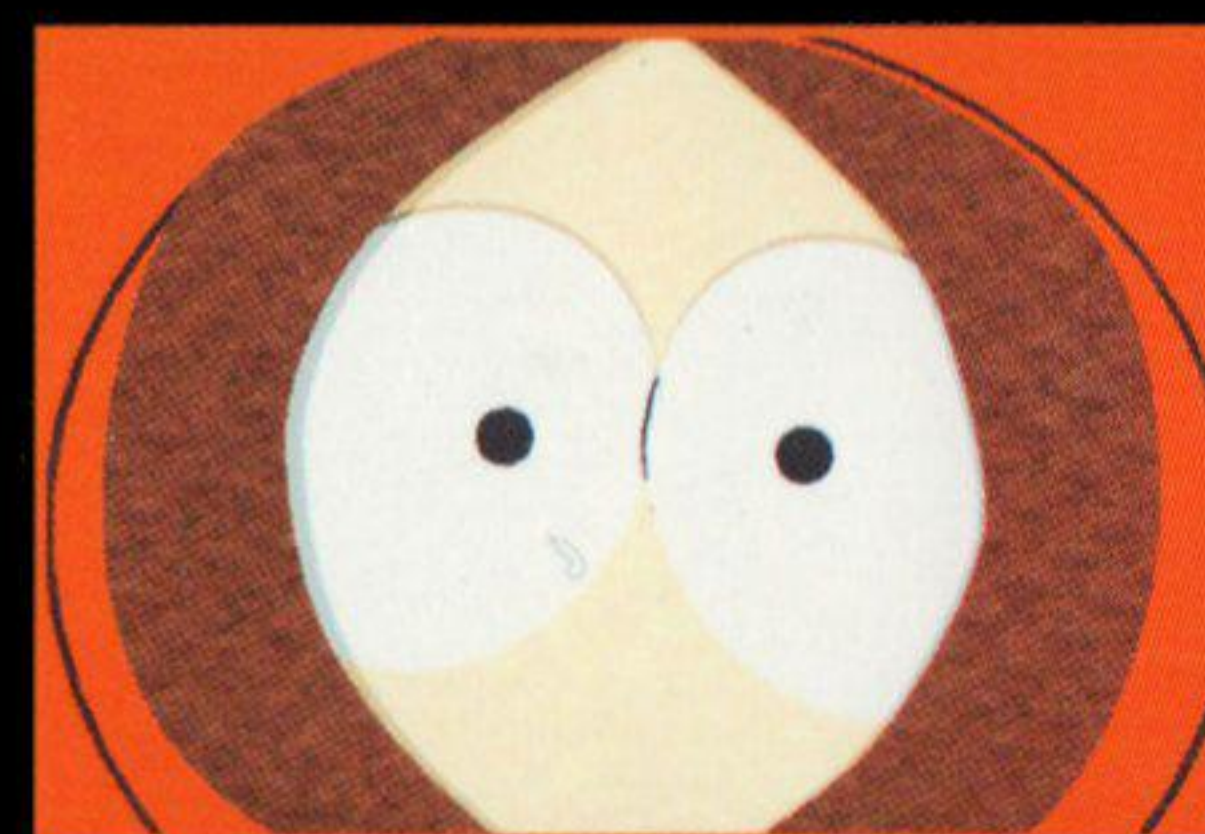
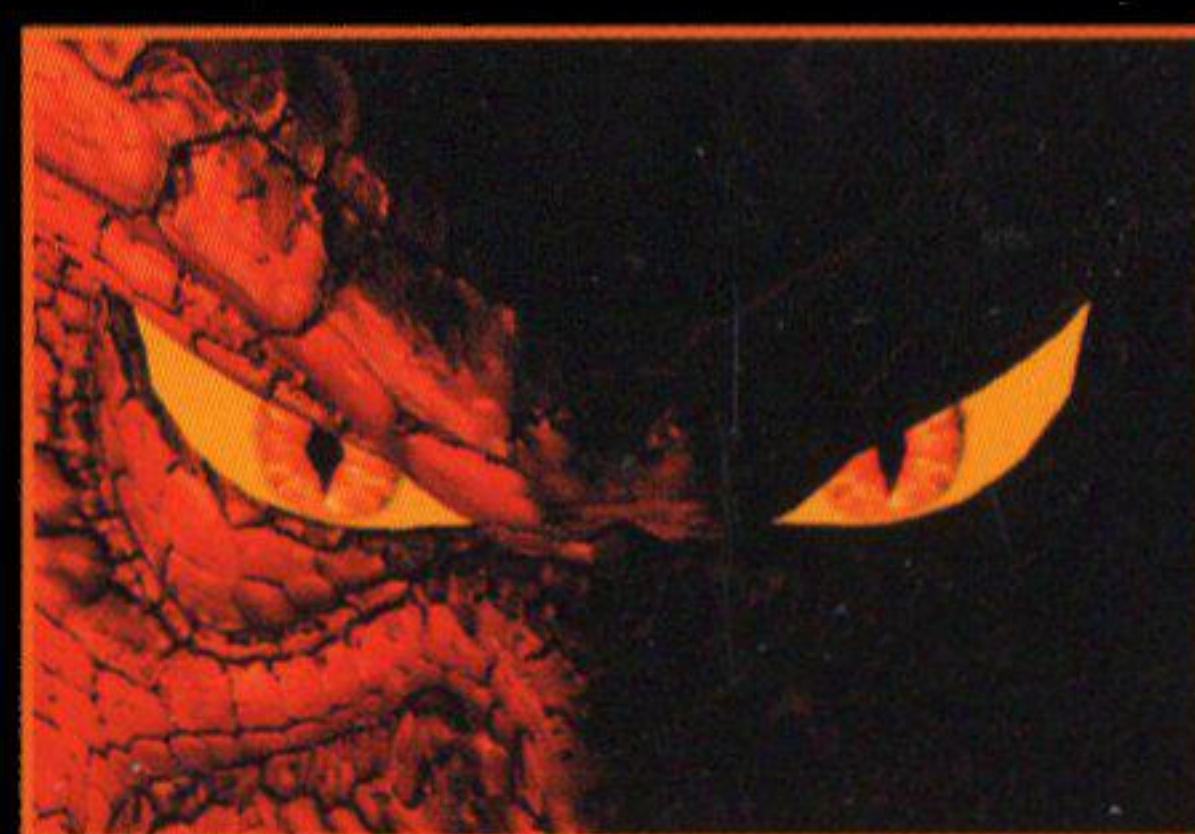
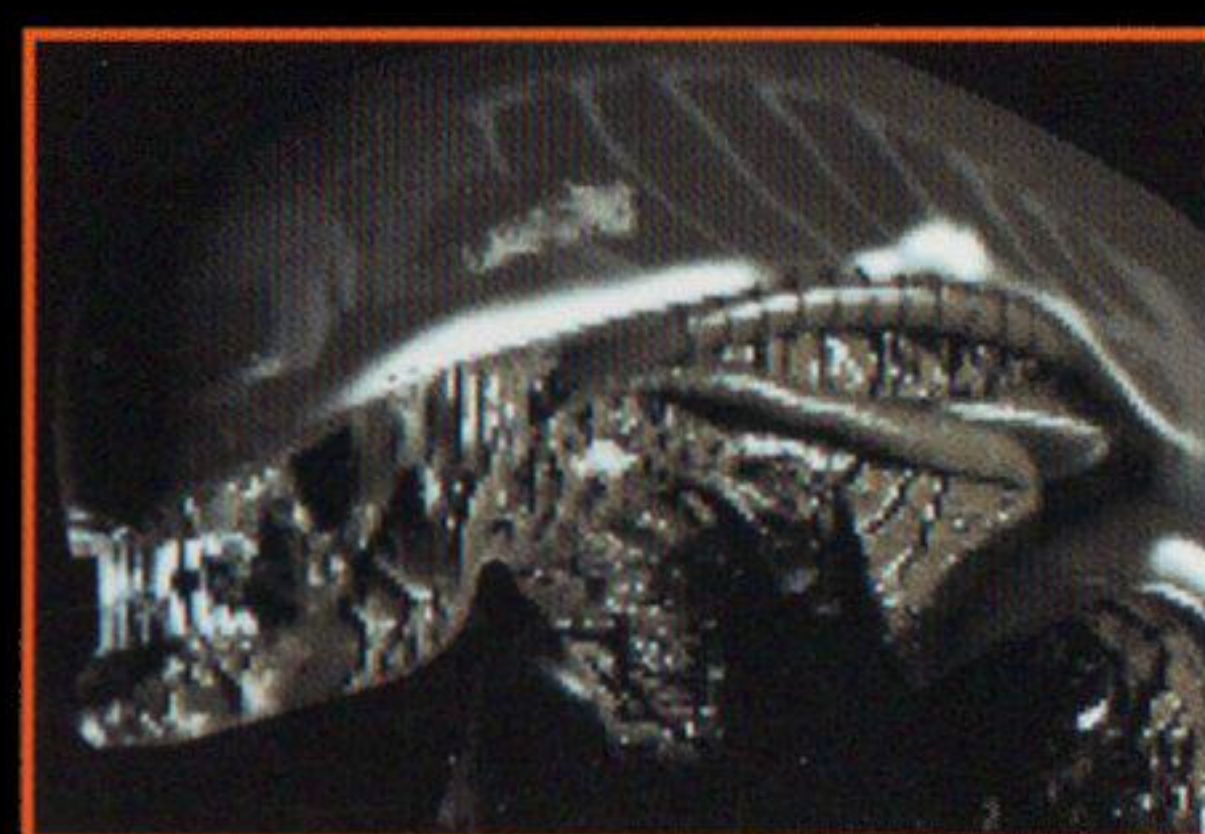
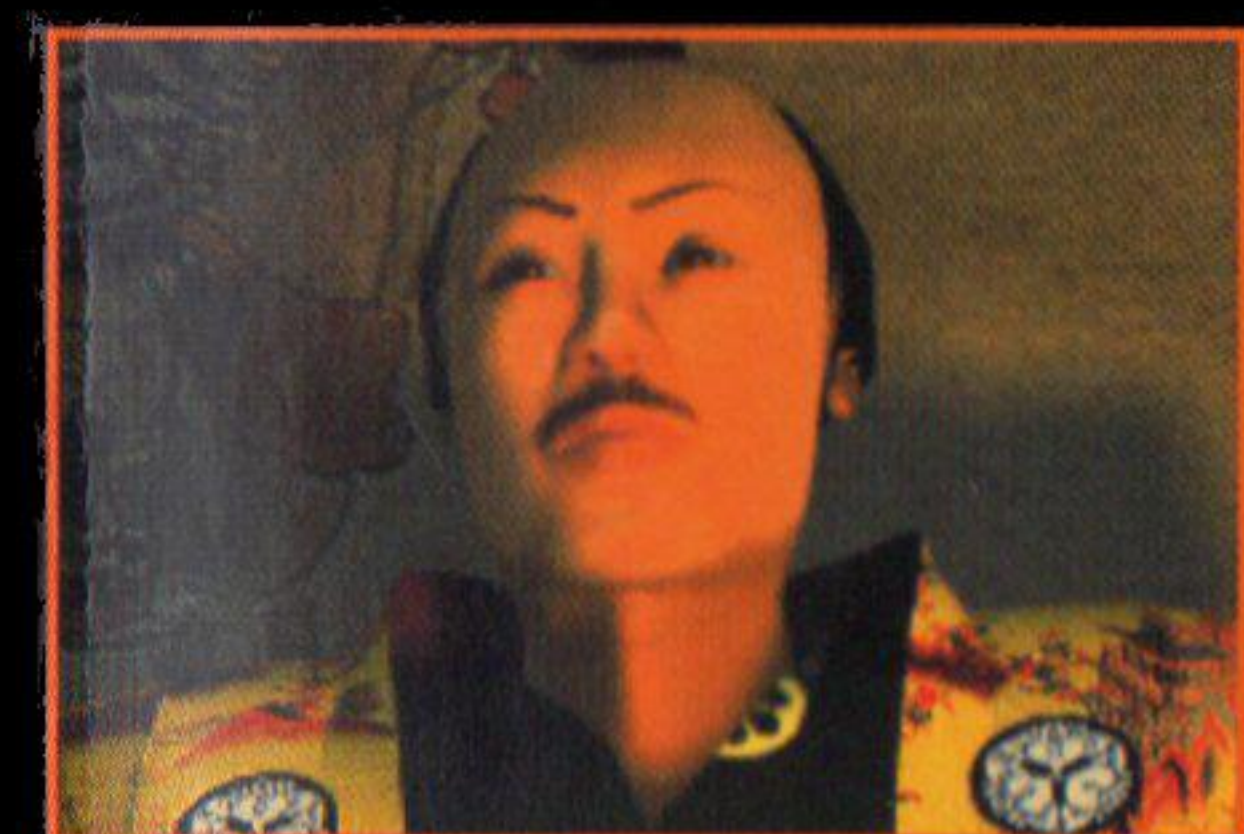
ISSUE 4 FEB'99 PRICE £2.50

NINTENDO
PARTIES
LIKE IT'S
1999...

THREE NEW TITLES FOR THE
ULTIMATE VIDEOGAME HERO

...BUT BEWARE
OF GATECRASHERS!

THE HEDGEHOG'S BACK IN AN
ALL-NEW DREAMCAST ADVENTURE



ALSO INSIDE:

CLIMAX LANDERS • VIVA FOOTBALL • HERETIC II • SOUTH PARK • EHRGEIZ • R-TYPE DELTA • DUNGEON KEEPER 2 • AKUJI THE HEARTLESS • BLOOD 2
TONIC TROUBLE • ALPHA CENTAURI • ALIENS VS. PREDATOR • WAR OF THE WORLDS • MAX POWER RACING • RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 • SHENMUE



"Lara's back and looking better than ever."

PC Zone

"Bigger, faster and more challenging than either of the previous games... the new Tomb Raider is the best of the lot."

Ultimate PC

"Tomb Raider III will be absolutely brilliant... might just be the best Raider yet."

Official PlayStation Magazine

"Lara Croft shoots for a Hat Trick and scores."

Play

"Tomb Raider III more than matches up to the previous efforts and could even turn out to be THE Tomb Raider."

PlayStation Power

It's
to
but I
be



www.eidosinteractive.co.uk



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TOMB RAIDER III™

ADVENTURES OF LARA CROFT

hard
believe
just get
tter and
better

Lara is back in Tomb Raider III and she just gets better and better.

Is it due to her new weapons and vehicles?

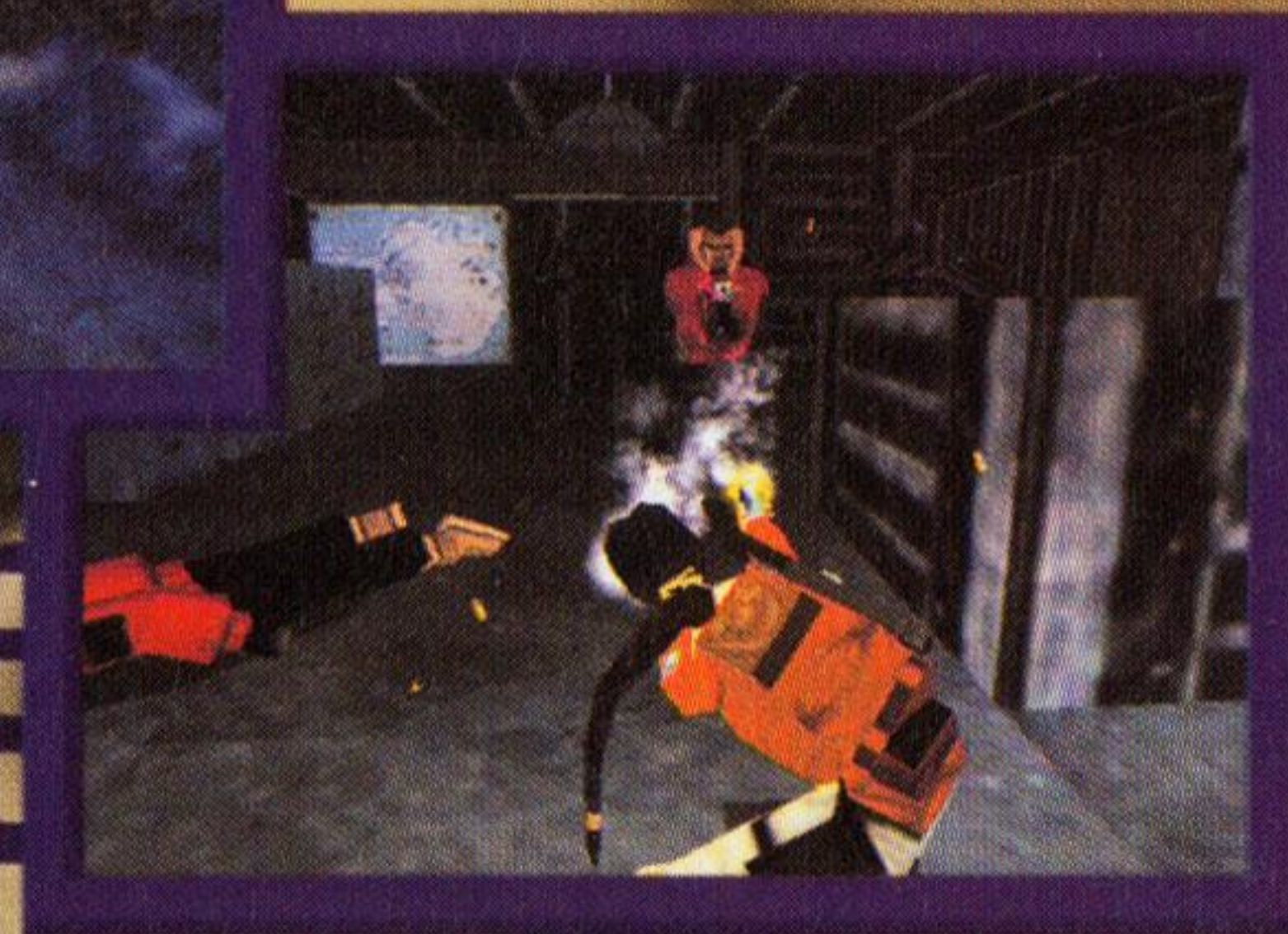
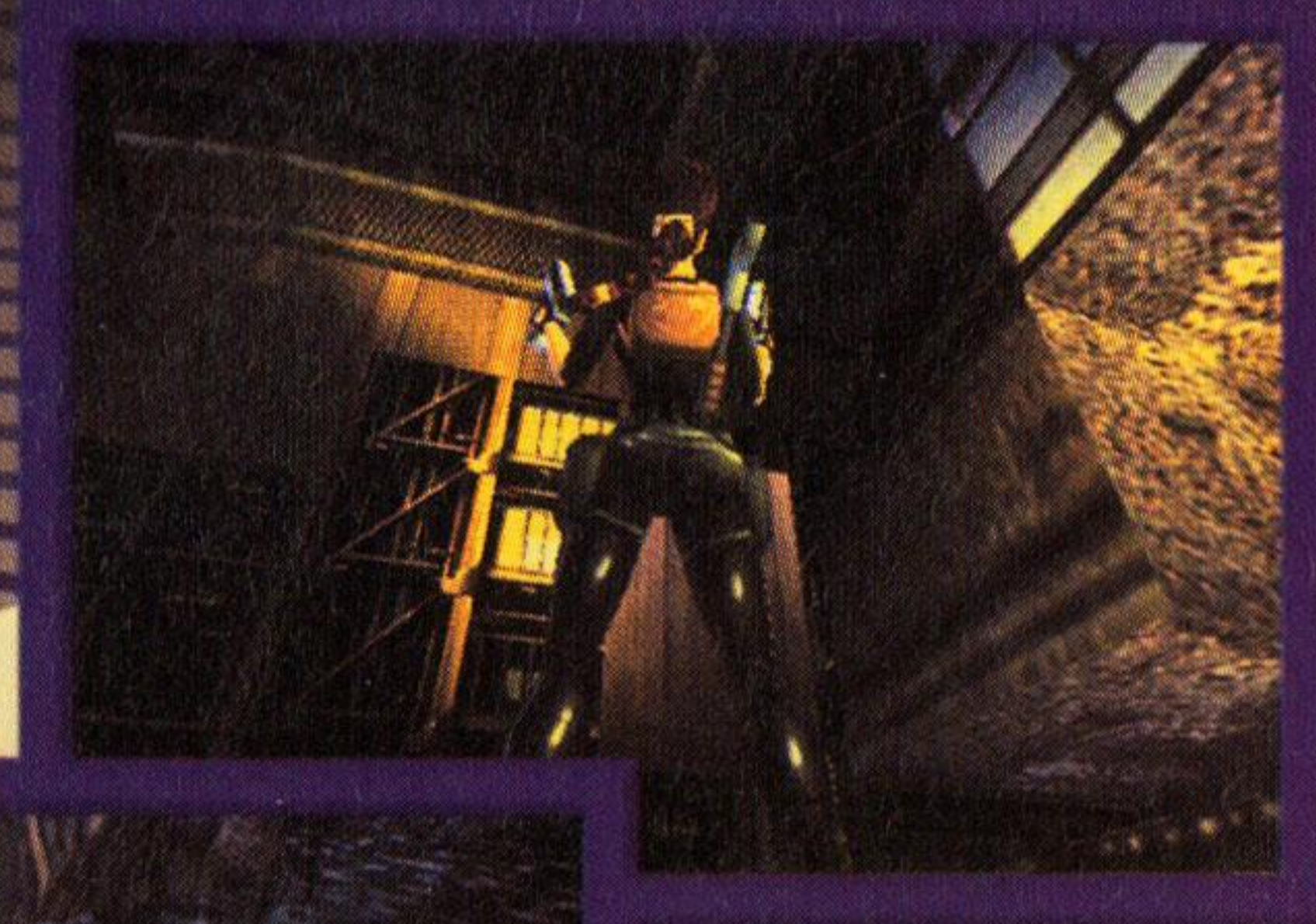
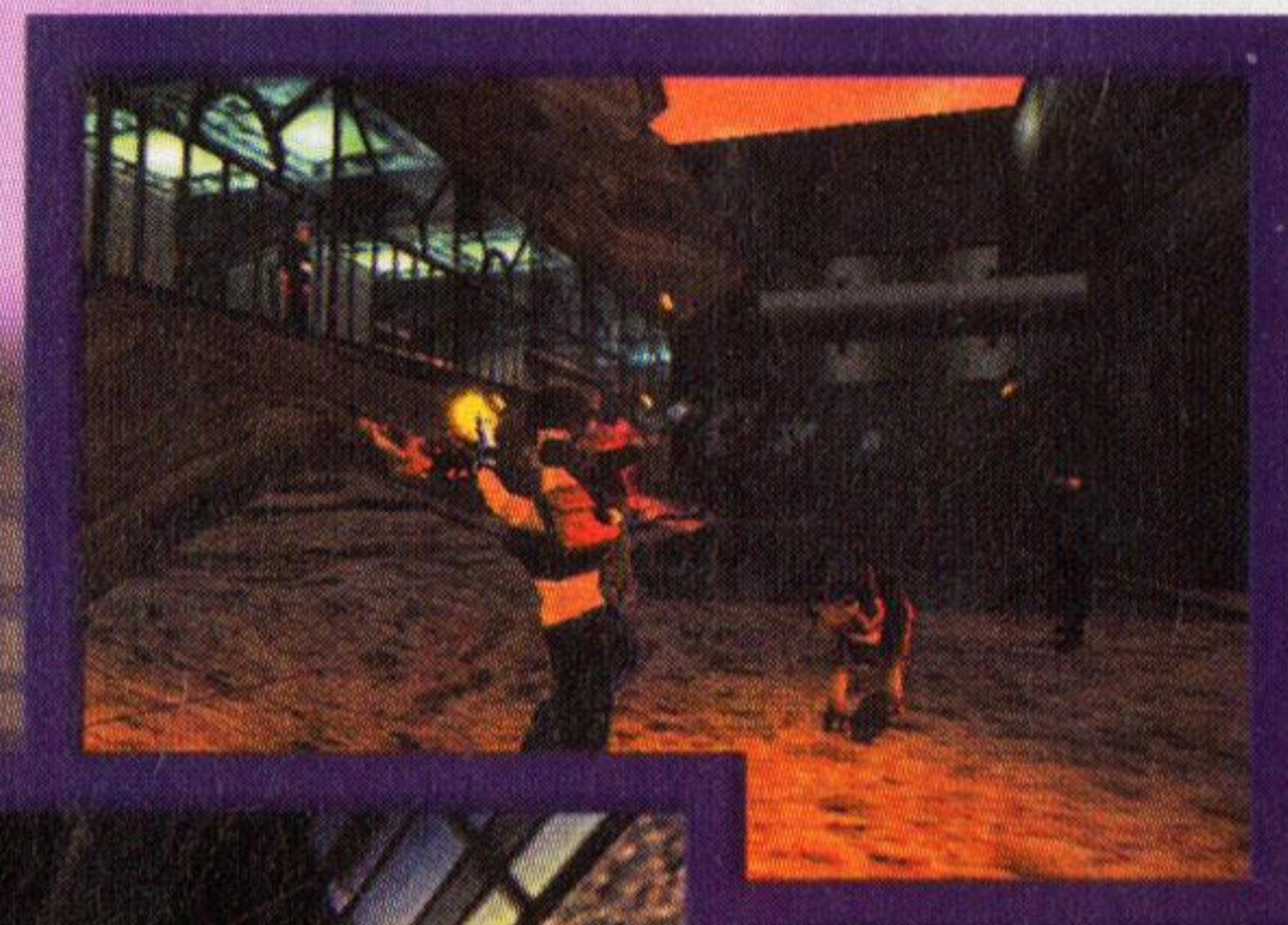
Or the challenges she faces
in new locations?

It may be her new outfits and
the moves she's learned?

Perhaps it's just that she's more adventurous.

There is only one way to find out...

...Pick up a copy of Tomb Raider III
and decide for yourself.



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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

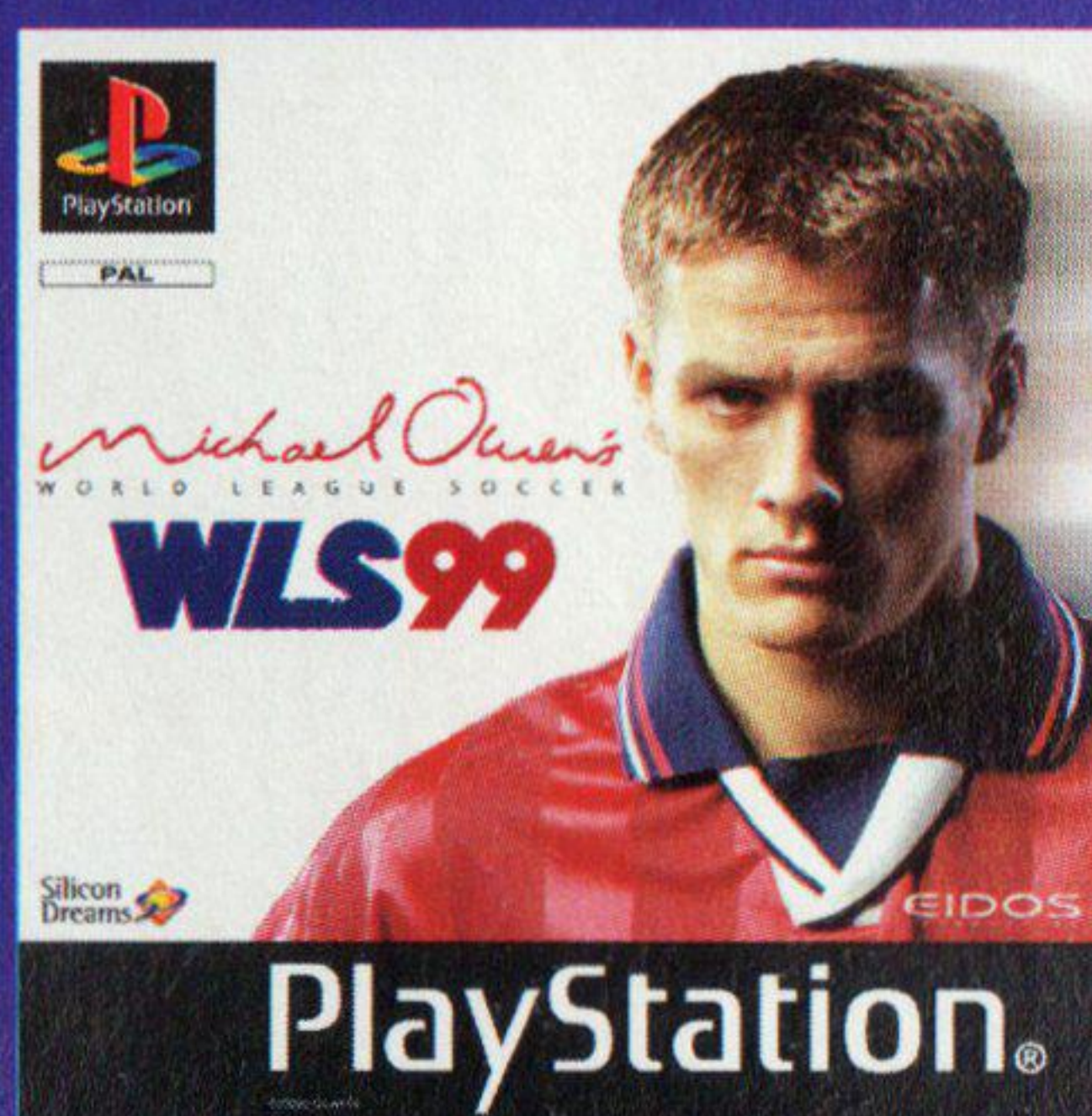
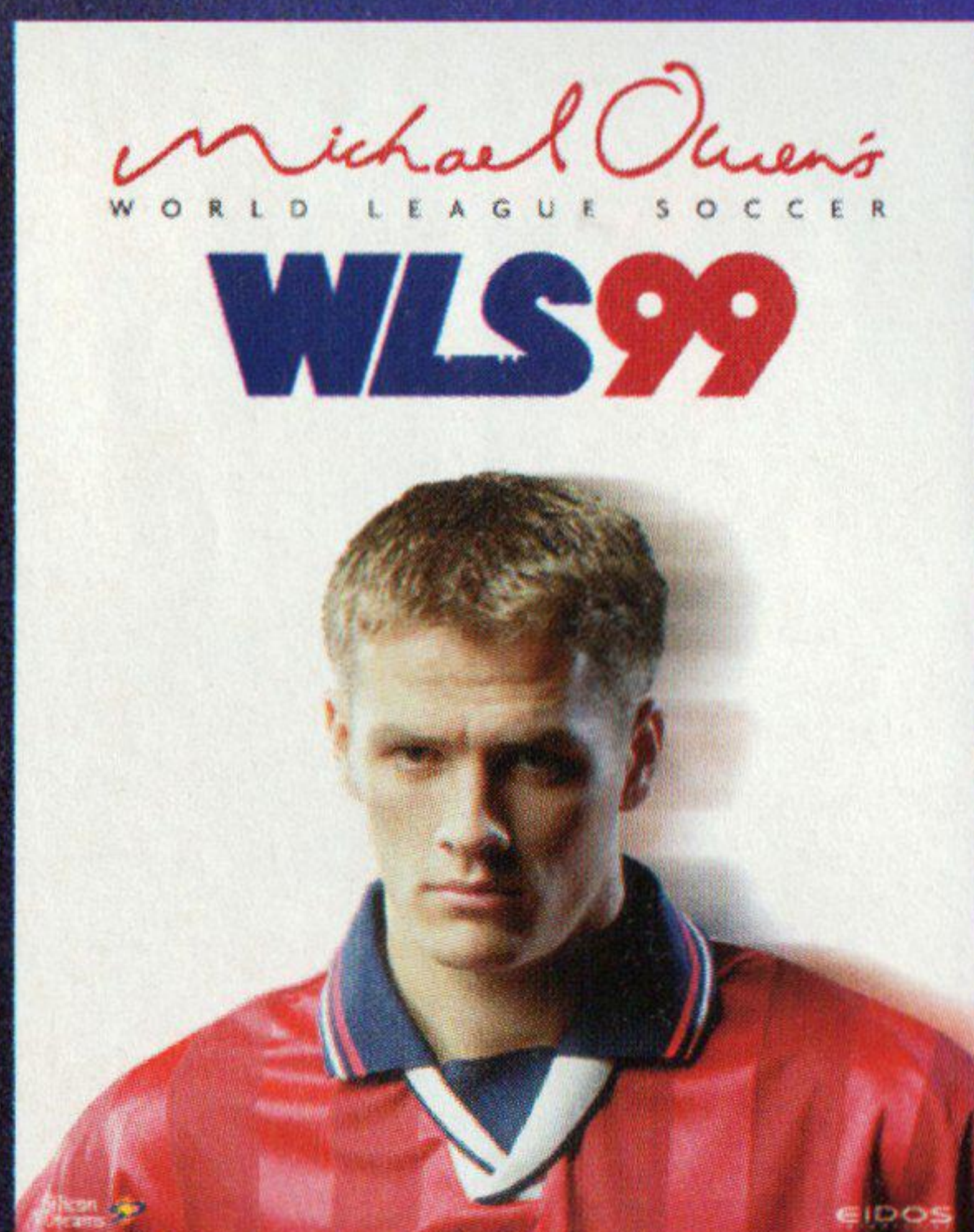
**"Get yourself Michael Owen's
World League Soccer '99, probably
the closest thing to the beautiful
game itself."**

91% Playstation Plus — Dec 98

**"The most realistic footy game
you can get your hands on"**

9/10 Playstation Pro — Jan 99

World cla



SS...



...oh, and Michael Owen.



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ALPHA REPORT

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036 Dungeon Keeper II

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030

Set in sixteenth century Japan, this innovative strategic wargame should revitalise a tired genre



DUNGEON KEEPER II

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Bullfrogs classic twist on the real time strategy genre returns for a second run. Be good now...



CLIMAX LANDERS

052

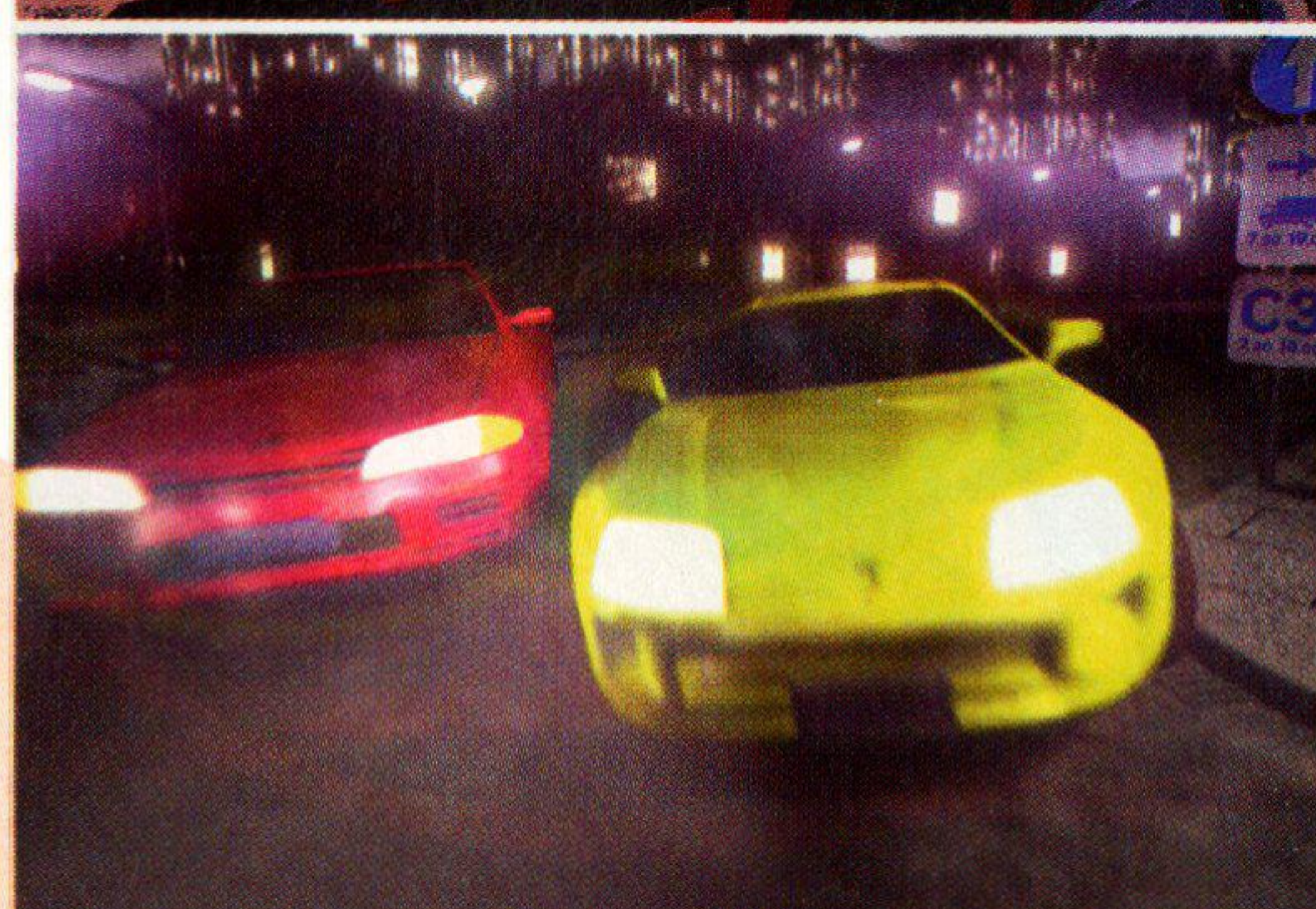
This is the game that could do for the Dreamcast what *Final Fantasy VII* did for the PlayStation. Enough said?



NIGHTMARE CREATURES

078

After conquering the PC and PlayStation this gothic arcade adventure makes its move onto the N64.



MAX POWER RACING

098

The most hyped PlayStation racer since *Gran Turismo*. A nice little runner or an insurance job?

TOTAL

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C

IN

CONTROL



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FEATURE

- 044** A History of Super Mario
Nintendo's chief mascot has been the most enduring videogame character in history. Total CONTROL decided to take a look at just what makes him so special.
- 064** Alien Invasion
Aliens Vs. Predator and *Alien Resurrection*, two great looking games for later this year on the PC and PlayStation. In cyberspace no-one will hear you scream.
- 112** Star Wars
Film tie-ins have become increasingly common in recent years, but the Star Wars trilogy of movies has been spawning videogames for years.
- 124** What's DVD then?
Still in the dark about DVD? Friends think you're ignorant? Read all about double-layered disks and MPEG-2, and you'll never need to feel stupid again.
- 140** Dreamcast Launch
The most important console launch in the history of Sega. Total CONTROL's Rachel Ryan reports on the amazing response from the Japanese gamesplaying public.



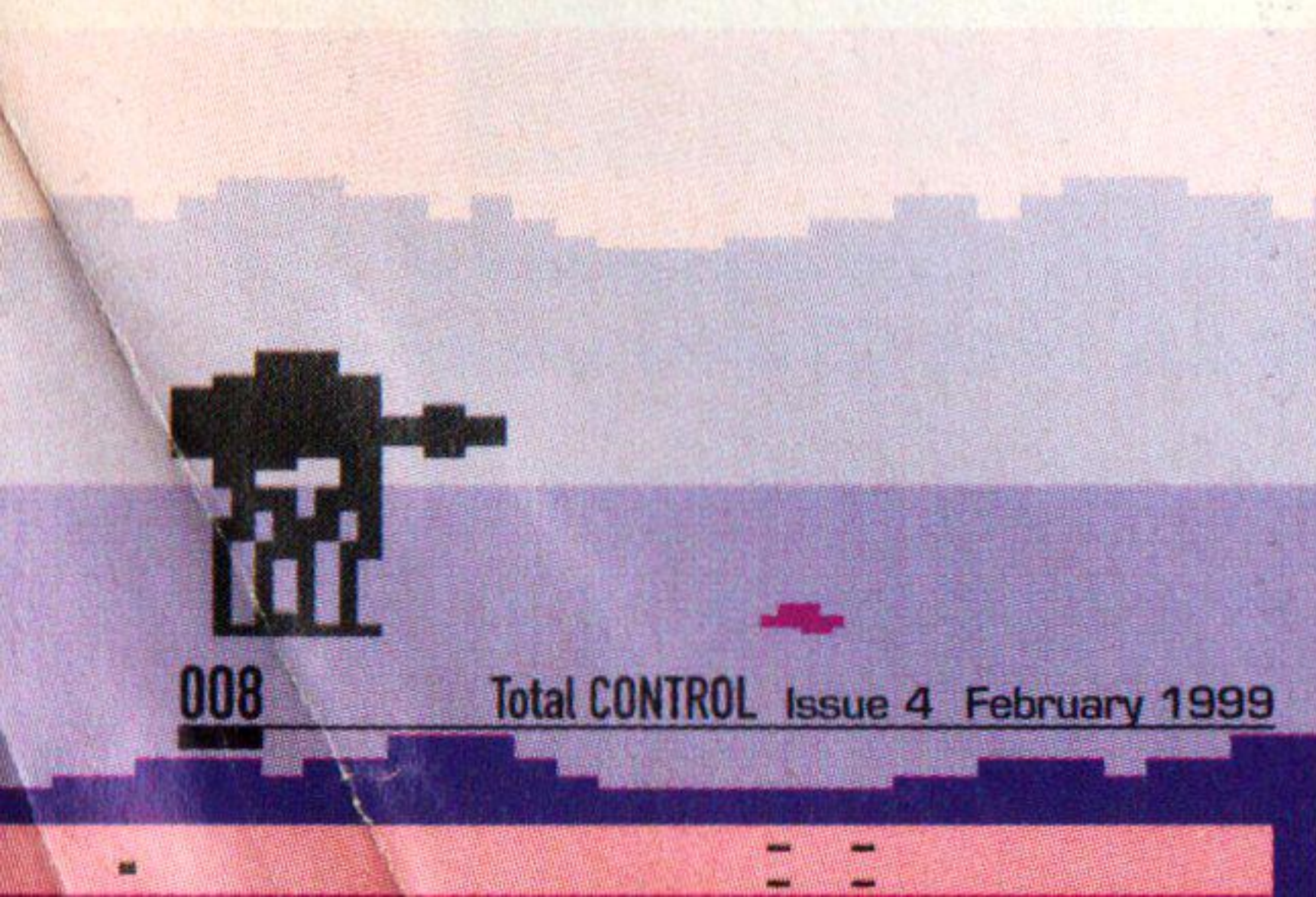
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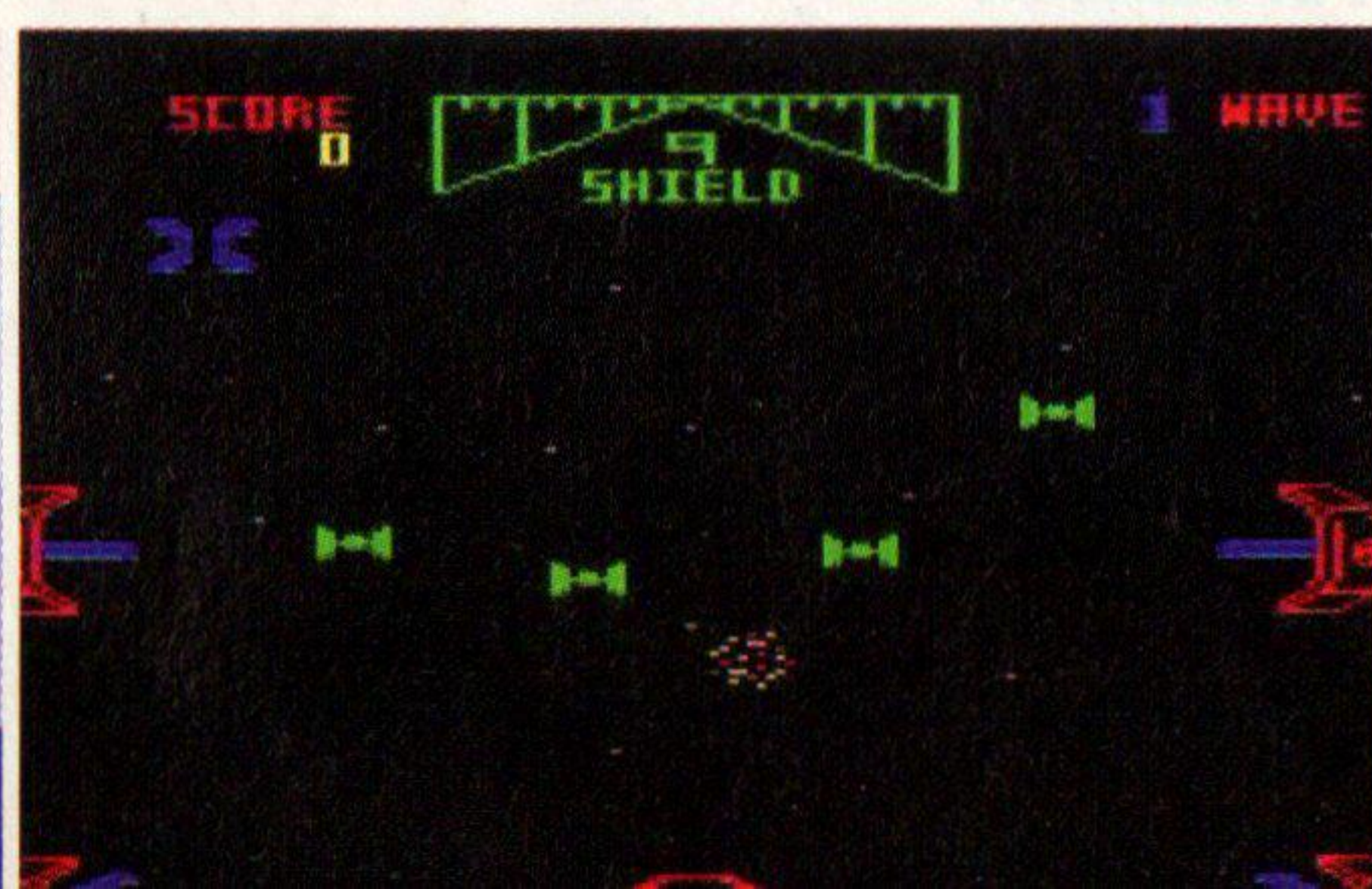


140



008

Total CONTROL Issue 4 February 1999



112

THERE'S A NASTY LITTLE BUG GOING AROUND

TOTAL 64 MAGAZINE

92%

64 MAGAZINE

90%



PESTICIDAL MANIAC

COMING SOON FOR THE N64 www.ubisoft.co.uk



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C

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CONTROL

THOSE IN CONTROL

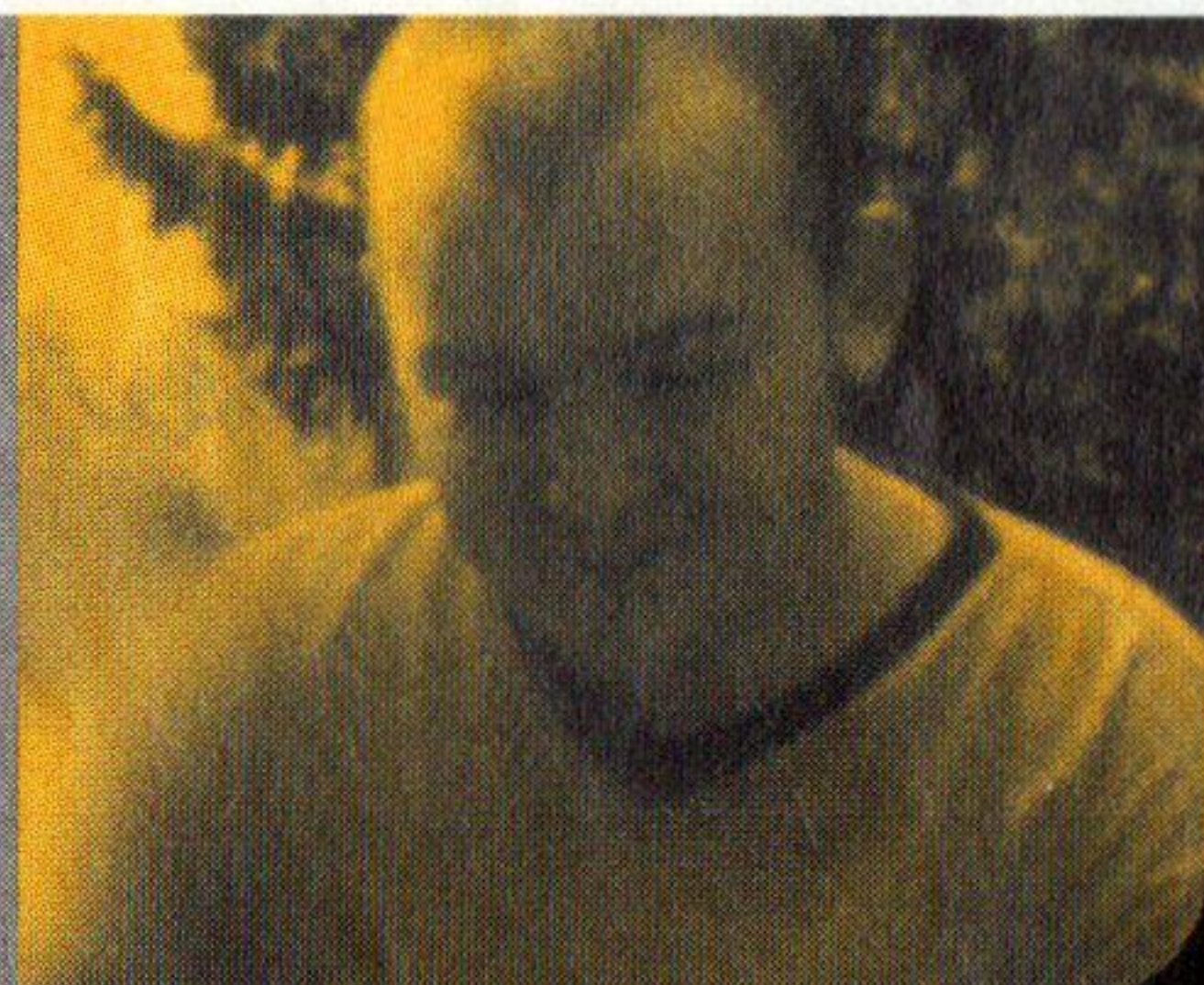
JUSTIN



Half-Life, what a game! I never thought I'd see the day that the Ultimate PC and Total CONTROL teams uninstalled *Quake II* from our PC network. At least not until *Quake III: Arena* turned up. But Valve's masterpiece has seen *Quake II*, *SiN* and even the office Dreamcast gathering dust as the now regular eight player sessions have the entire office filled with the sounds of gunfire and frustrated players shouting abuse at Will, the undisputed office champ. For those of you who have never experienced a

multiplayer game of *Half-Life*, or any other decent PC game for that matter, I strongly recommend that you pay a visit to your local cyber cafe or similar. There's a very good reason why games consoles nowadays are increasingly looking to incorporate multiplayer capabilities; killing an AI enemy is fun, but all the best predators prefer live prey - and gamers are no exception.

NICK



It's been a contrasting month. A month where I've rediscovered the joys of the 2D platformers with Mario. A month when Sega's Dreamcast made a significant step towards a game that simulates real life - a game in the form of *Shenmue*. It attempts to create a model world with elements like time and weather and having to earn a living so that your character can eat. Now this sounds like an experiment that is worth commending but does it signify a new direction in gaming? The potential is as infinite as the real world but can a game like this ever

be as playable as a simple game like *Super Mario World*? Obviously these two are, quite literally, worlds apart, surely Mario has more in common with *Pong* than with the concept of *Shenmue*? They both have one thing in common, however, and that is they transport you to a new world. *Shenmue* looks more realistic but the only real difference is how much of a leap your imagination can make...

CLIFF

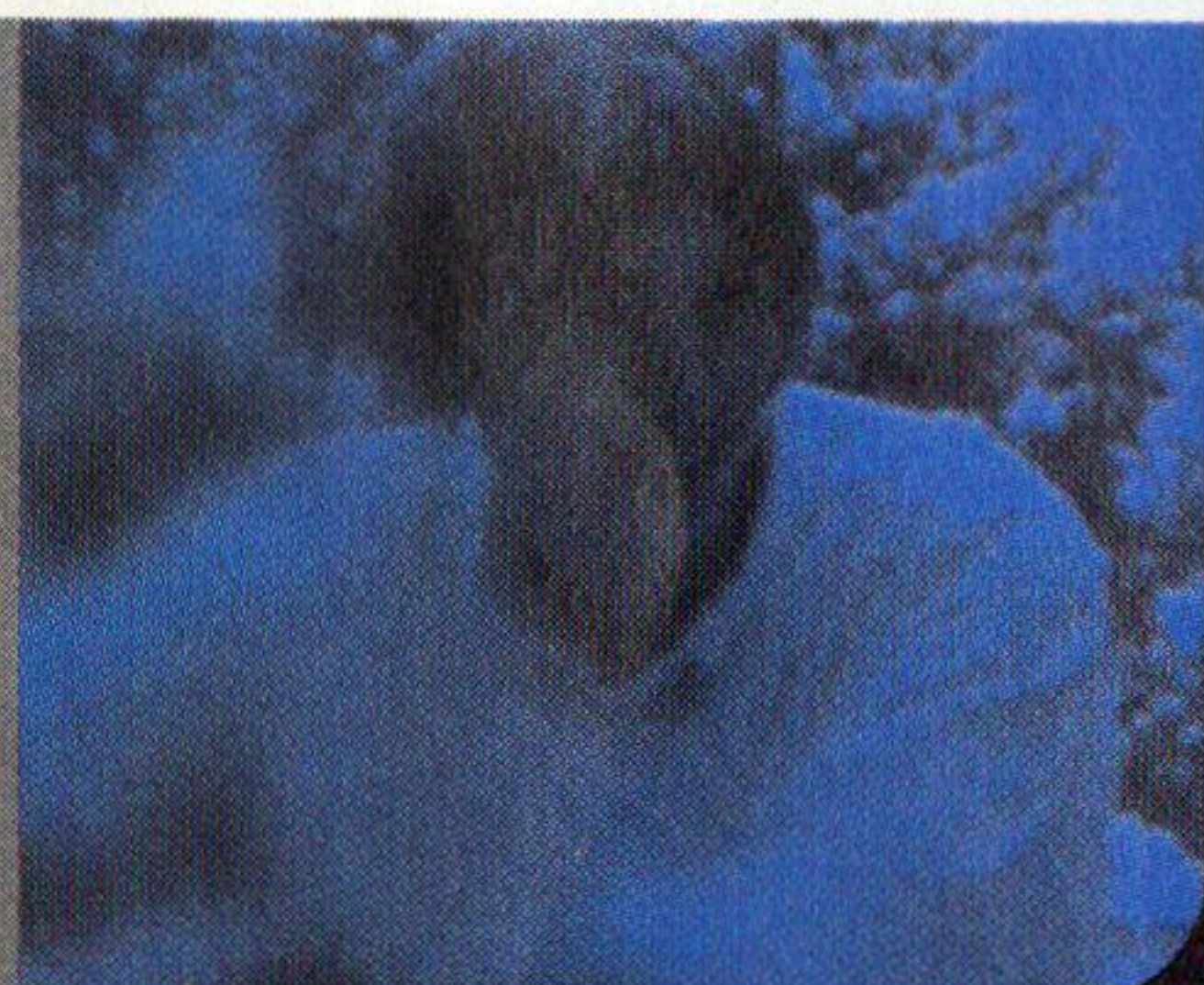


Well, here we are in the last year of the millennium. Look on the bright side, it's not the end of the world...

Those three nines are just numbers on a clock, and I'm pretty sure the planet isn't about to go boom just because we like to count the years, although it is possible that a huge explosion will send the moon hurtling away through space. Whatever else comes to pass in 1999, it's going to be a good year for our readers. We've got plans, you see, and Total CONTROL

is going to keep on getting better and better. Electronic home entertainment is going through a revolution at the moment, what with digital TV, DVD and super-powerful games consoles, and we are going to be right in there keeping you up to date on it all. We're taking gaming - and a whole lot more - to the next millennium, and you are welcome to come along for the ride.

WILL



So it seems Sega have been allowed to release the Dreamcast with no interference from Sony. Despite rumours that an official announcement would be made only days before its Japanese release back in November, it now looks as if this won't be happening until well into '99, possibly even later than E3. Whether the reason was due to inferior specifications or not remains uncertain, but it seems likely to me that the launch of the PlayStation 2 will be much closer to that of the N2000 than the Dreamcast.

While this will be very favourable to Sega, as it will allow them to build up a stronger foundation for their machine, I doubt Nintendo will be as happy. Sony's loyal user base and firmly established position in the industry will attract huge attention towards their next console, and it will be imperative for Nintendo to release the higher specification machine in order to remain competitive.

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YOU'RE **AGGRESSIVE**, DESTRUCTIVE, **INSENSITIVE** AND OVERLY
COMPETITIVE. YOU'RE A BAD **LOSER** AND YOU'RE
RUTHLESS. YOU DON'T EVEN CARE WHO YOU WIPE OUT IN PURSUIT
 OF YOUR OWN AGENDA. YOUR HABITS ARE **DISGUSTING**
 AND YOUR **ADDICTIVE** NATURE IS **APPALLING**. IN
 FACT, YOU'RE A **BASTARD** WHO JUST NEVER KNOWS
 WHEN TO **QUIT**.

YOU'RE PERFECT!

DODGEM
 arena

"DODGEM ARENA IS SHAPING UP TO BE AN ADDICTIVE HIGH-OCTANE PULSE-RACER."

PLAY MAGAZINE

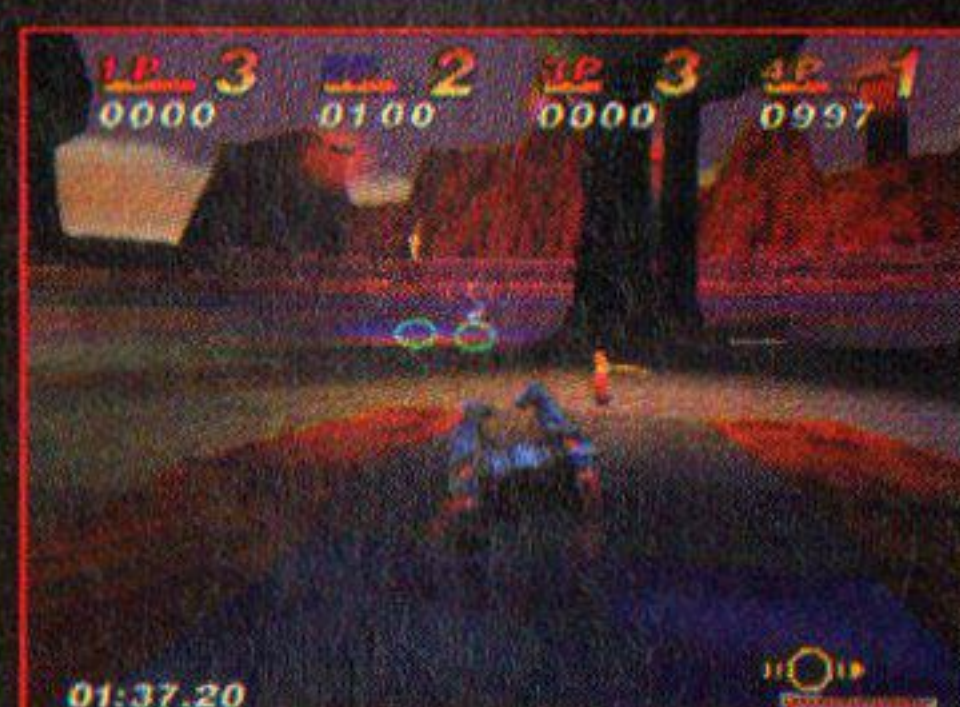
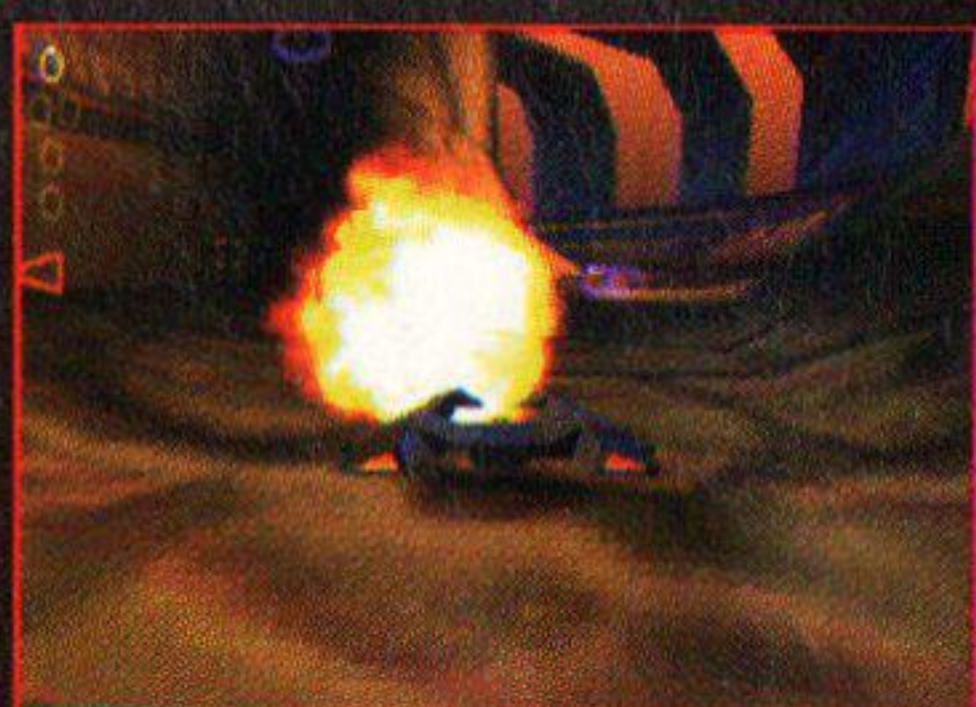
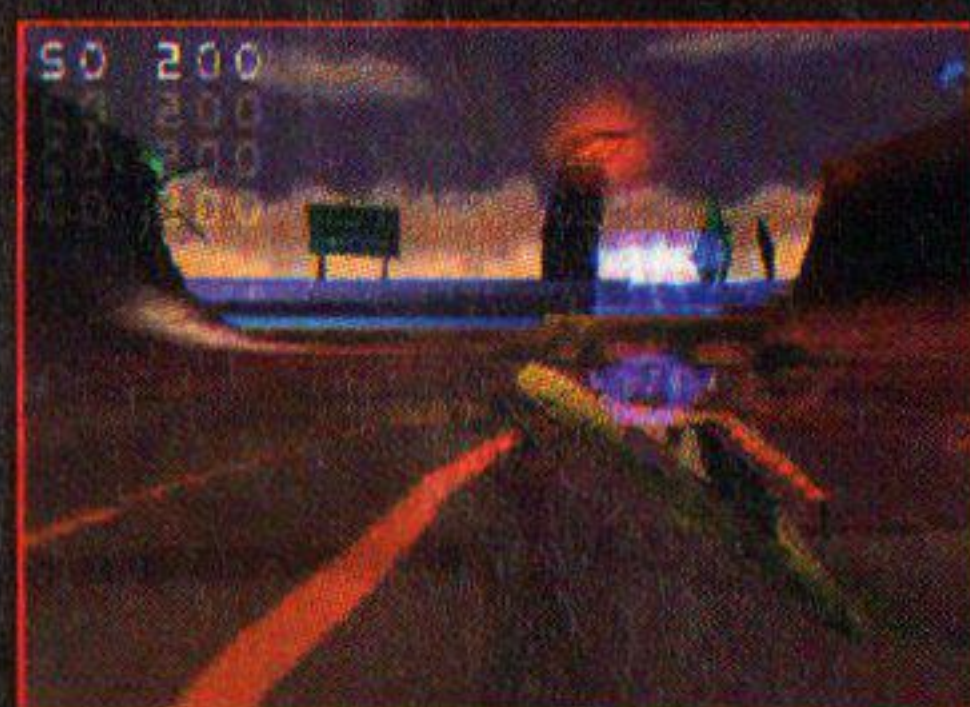
"PRETTY AND FAST...HAS PLENTY UNDER IT'S BELT TO
 NOURISH THE HARDER-CORE KIND OF GAMER."

TOTAL
PlayStation

"VERY CLEVER, SIMPLE, ULTIMATELY ADDICTIVE AND FUN. IF YOU CAN'T
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85%

extreme
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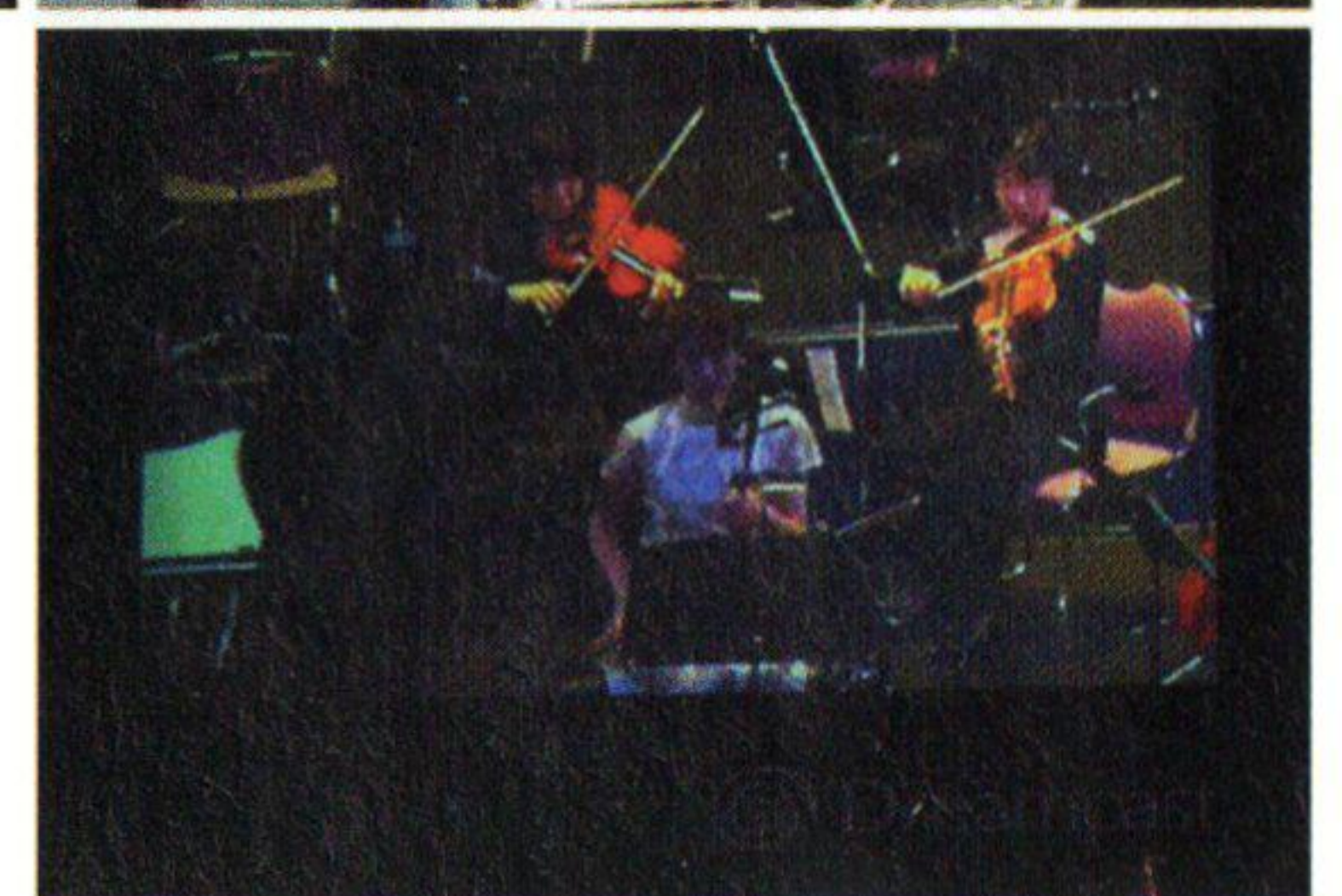
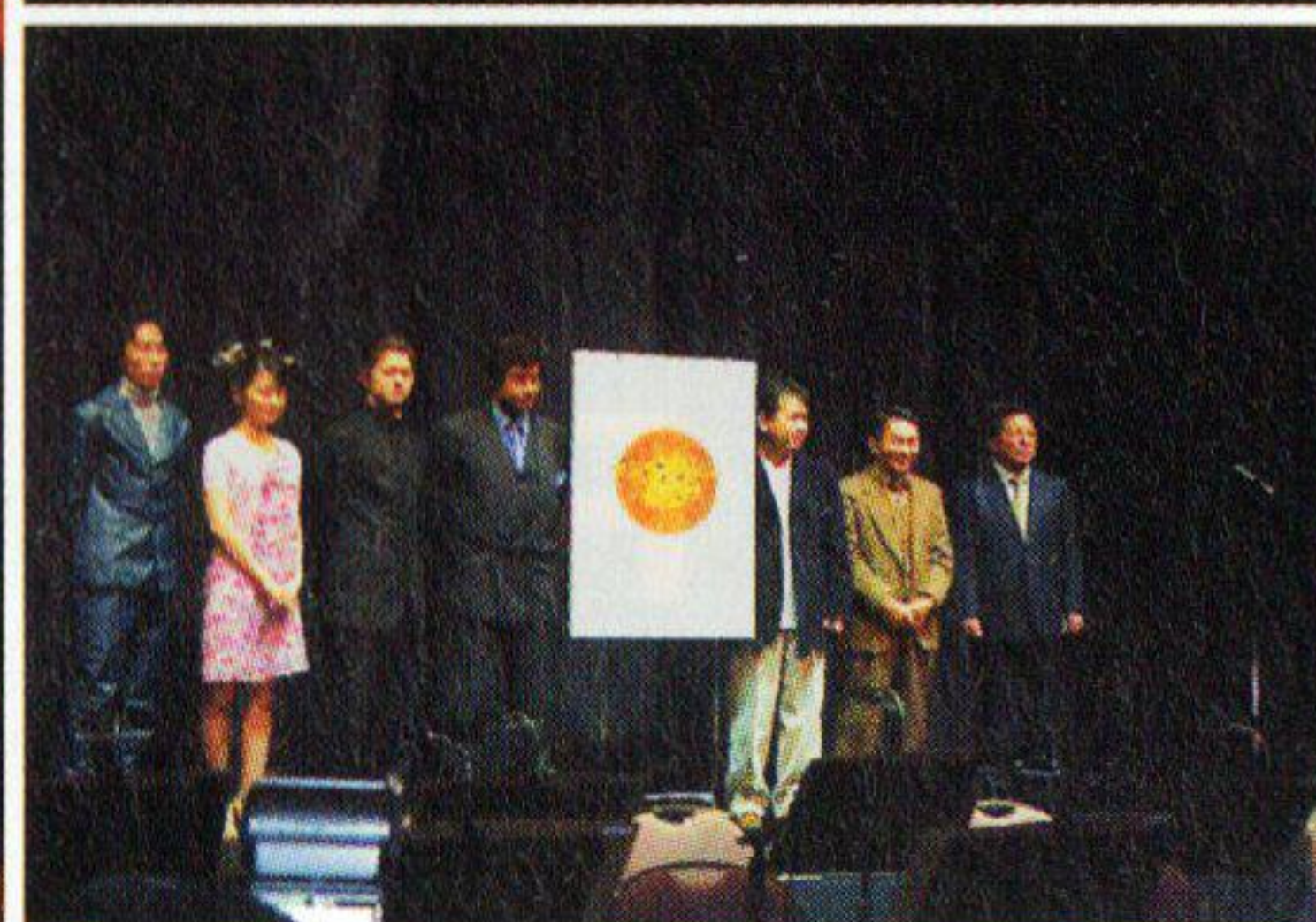
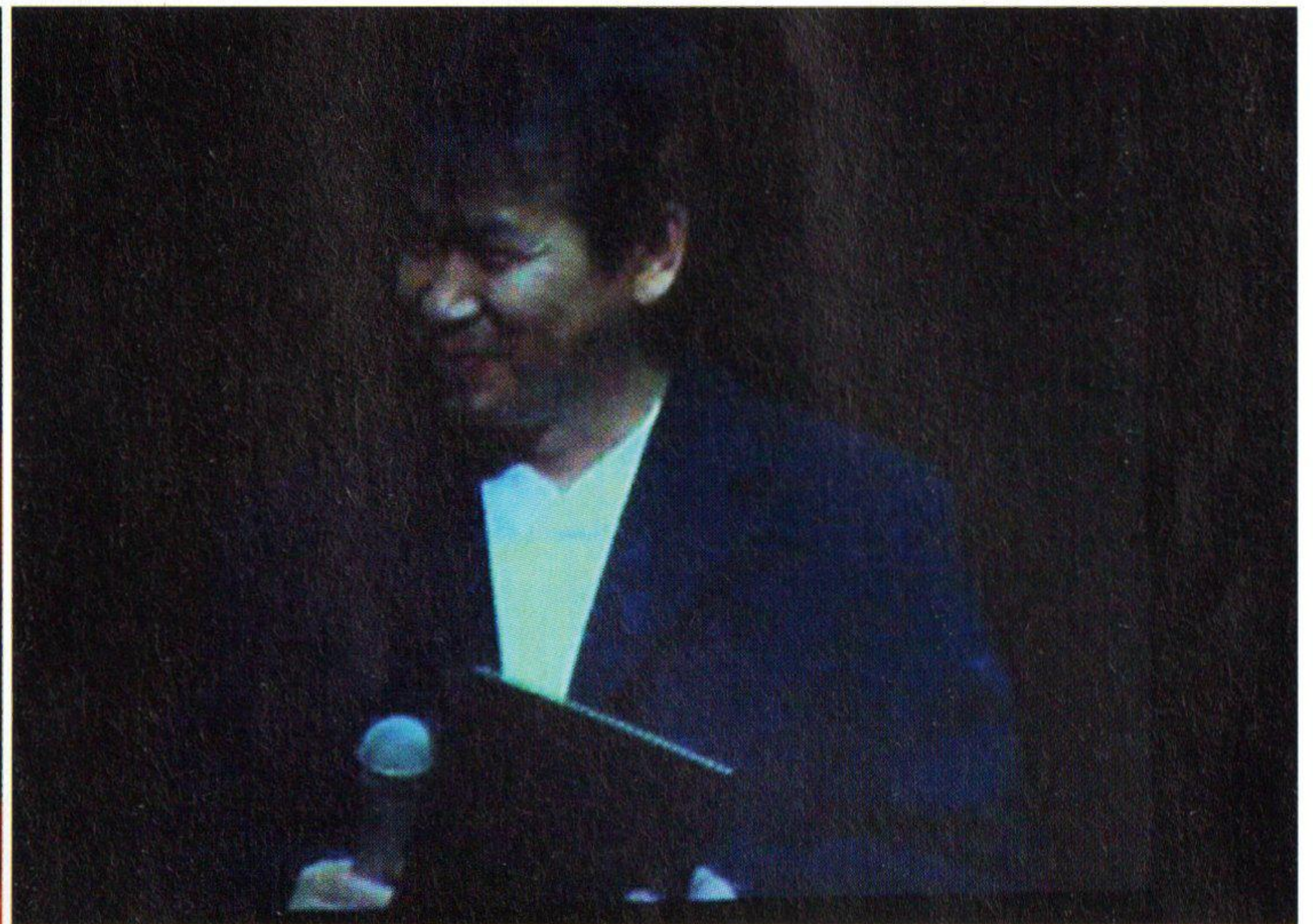
FORMULA
 game development



R

REPORTAGE

THIS MONTH'S REPORTAGE UNCOVERS SEGA'S SECRET BEHIND *PROJECT BERKLEY*, REVEALS NINTENDO ARE ENTERING THE RACE FOR ON-LINE CONSOLE GAMES, AND REPORTS ON THE PLAYSTATION'S CONTINUED SUCCESS IN ALL TERRITORIES. ALSO THERE'S NEWS ON *JET FORCE GEMINI*, *GIANTS* AND A COUPLE OF NEW SQUARE TITLES...



"FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE 21ST CENTURY"

Sega reveal the secret behind Project Berkley

The end of last year saw Sega announce what has become possibly the biggest game in their history. The game in question has been previously known as *Virtua Fighter RPG* and *Project Berkley* – it is now officially known as *Shenmue*.

The game was revealed to Japanese press and the games playing public in an unprecedented public relations exercise in the Nation Convention Hall of Yokohama in

Tokyo. All attendants were treated to a bag full of goodies, including a *Shenmue* T-shirt, 2-track CD, tattoos, a special notebook and a *Shenmue*

colour brochure. By all accounts the announcement and whole event was enough to convince attendees that this game will be the biggest in Sega's history.

Shenmue has been developed by Yu Suzuki,

Sega's long-standing arcade chief, who has been responsible for such classics as *Out Run*, *Space Harrier* and more recently, the *Virtua*

Suzuki said that he wanted to produce a game that anyone over the age of five could play, yet deep enough for adults and that he

SHENMUE TAKES ITS INFLUENCES FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES – FROM SQUARE'S RPGS, SUZUKI'S OWN FIGHTING GAMES – AND THEN ADDS A WHOLE LOAD OF ITS OWN

Fighter series. Previously rumoured to be an RPG based on the *Virtua Fighter* characters, it was revealed by Suzuki that the game has elements of this, but then a whole lot more.

intends to do this with a highly detailed game, creating a "real stage" for fascinating characters in a moving story. His objective is to give players "a woven picture of harmony in one world".



Total CONTROL's REPORTAGE is produced in association with
FGN Online – www.fgnonline.com



The promotional video bundled with Dreamcast *Virtua Fighter 3tb* only gives a taste of what's yet to come in Sega's forthcoming epic, *Shenmue*

The game is set primarily in China (with sections in Japan and Hong Kong), and there are four main characters from a cast of over 500. The hero of the game is called Ryo Hazuki – the heroine is known as Rei Shenhua. The other two characters are Rei's father, Iwao Hazuki, and Ryo's main rival, Ren Wuying. The detail involved in the character design is of an unprecedented level. Viewers of the demo shown were amazed to discover that the footage was produced real-time by the Dreamcast. Facial expression is especially impressive, as is the animation of the characters. In fact, *Shenmue* does not contain one single CG movie in the entire game. Indeed, Suzuki claimed, "the Dreamcast graphics processor is powerful

enough to render character features as delicate as real-time finger movements," which, "become crucial in the game's battle sequences."

It appears that the game can boast a realistic simulation of the real world and indeed Suzuki stated that "(*Shenmue*) recreates the real world in the context of a 'living' digital experience." It features night and day and realistic weather and, "is a fully interactive game in which characters can go wherever they choose and interact with whomever or whatever they want."

Battle sequences feature heavily in the game, and this is where the influence of *Virtua Fighter 3* can be seen. These are known as Quick Timer Events (QTE) where you need to press the right buttons

to execute moves (execute throws, sweeps and kicks etc.) or use character-specific special moves to defeat enemies. QTE is basically an interactive movie with a set of predetermined action sequences – pressing a certain button will trigger one of several possible outcomes. These battles will take only 10% of the game's total playing time, so expect plenty of exploration and interaction with characters.

The game boasts over 1200 'rooms', but it is not necessary to visit them all to complete *Shenmue*. Here the detail involved is truly impressive, and textures are so detailed it is hard to believe that it is all being drawn in real-time. But it is. Another part of the game that makes it

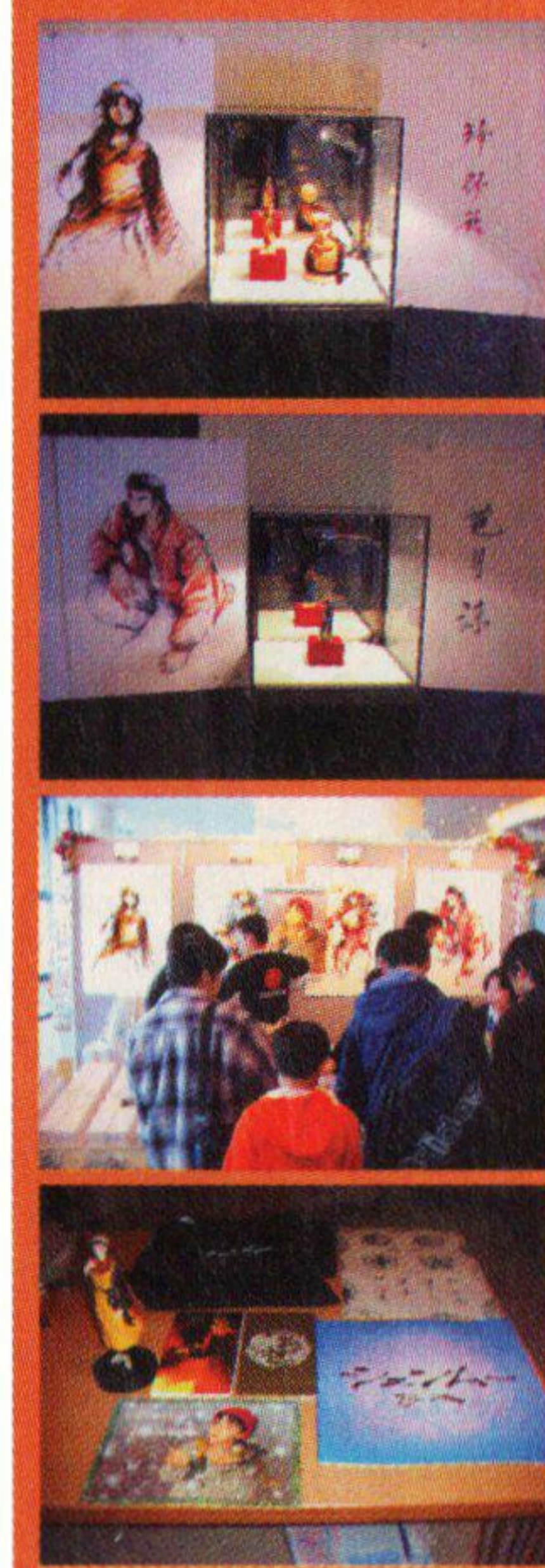
more realistic is that way that you have to earn money in order to feed yourself. You can do this in a variety of ways – a part-time job or gambling are just two of them.

It seems that *Shenmue* takes its influences from a variety of sources – from Square's RPGs, Suzuki's own fighting games – and then adds a whole load of its own. It looks like this game will be one that redefines what people consider possible from video games – but only time will tell.

Shenmue is due for release in April 1999 in Japan, and no announcements have been made concerning either a US or European release. It is highly likely, however, that such an important release will not be far behind its Japanese counterpart.

SHENMUE MERCHANDISE

You can tell this is going to be a very big launch by the standard of the merchandise on offer at the press conference. On sale were a variety of limited edition *Shenmue* prints and action figures. All visitors were treated to a goody bag with a CD, T-shirt, notebook and a glossy brochure.



The images shown above are all pre-rendered – the cut scenes in the game will all be handled in real-time. Fortunately, they don't look too dissimilar

JANUARY

CIV II:
MICROPROSE

TEST OF TIME
REQUIEM
UBISOFT

TUROK 2:
SEEDS OF EVIL
ACCLAIM

HOGS OF WAR
GREMLIN

DRAKAN
PSYGNOSIS



LANDER

PSYGNOSIS

FLY!

TAKE 2

FEBRUARY

STARSHIP
TROOPERS
MICROPROSE

ST: BIRTH OF
THE FEDERATION
MICROPROSE

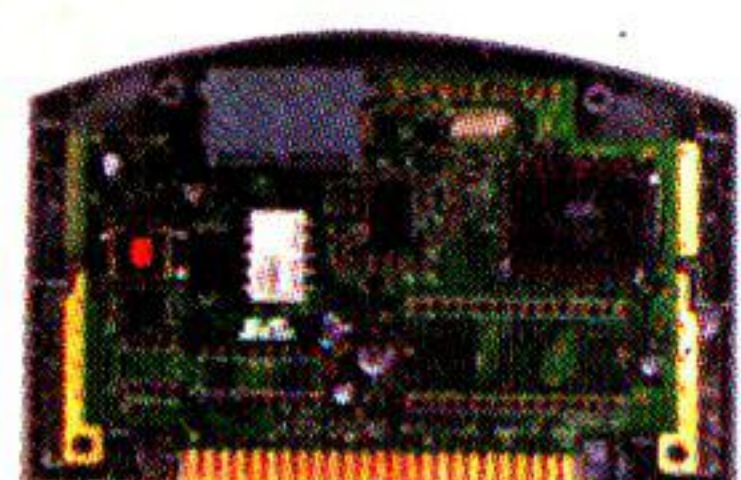
MECHWARRIOR III
MICROPROSE

X-COM: ALLIANCE
MICROPROSE

WARZONE 2100
EIDOS

REVENANT
EIDOS

URBAN CHAOS
EIDOS



Nintendo have released images of a mock up modem for the N64



ON-LINE NINTENDO

Nintendo announce N64 Internet capabilities

Hiroshi Yamauchi, Nintendo's long time chairman, has announced that Nintendo will be releasing a new hardware attachment that will allow N64 users to play games on-line and access the Internet. The device, which is not related to the 64DD, is set for a Japanese release before this summer. Yamauchi commented that, "Today's games consoles are all very well for playing games, but not

for collecting things." He is referring to his speech at the 1997 Nintendo Spaceworld, where he talked about the future of video games being collection, nurturing and discovery. In other words, he's talking about *Pocket Monsters*, and it is likely that these titles will play a large part in Nintendo's Internet strategy.

There has been no word from Nintendo yet as to whether the peripheral will be released in the US and Europe.

SQUARESOFT UK

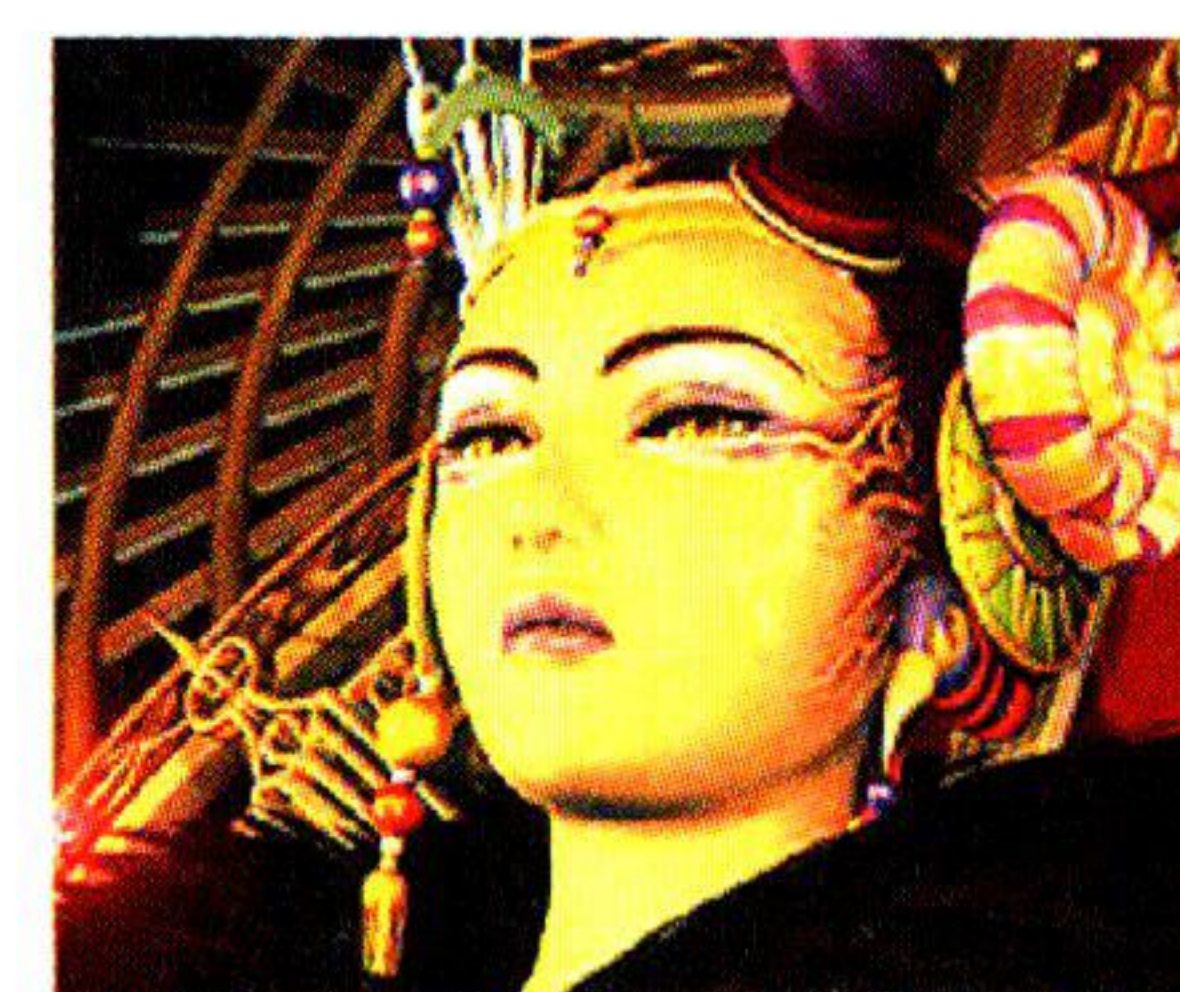
Japanese software giant to set up UK offices

Squaresoft, the company best known for games such as *Final Fantasy VII* and *Bushido Blade*, have unofficially announced that they will have a dedicated UK base soon after the New Year.

It had been expected that Square would work from the offices at EA (EA publish Square's games in the US), but it has become apparent that they will have their own offices in a site in central London.

Although Square have not officially confirmed the move,

they have recruited Fox Interactive's European marketing manager, Simon Etchells, and will work alongside general manager of Squaresoft Europe, Tom Yoshikai.



THE PRINCE OF ANIMATION

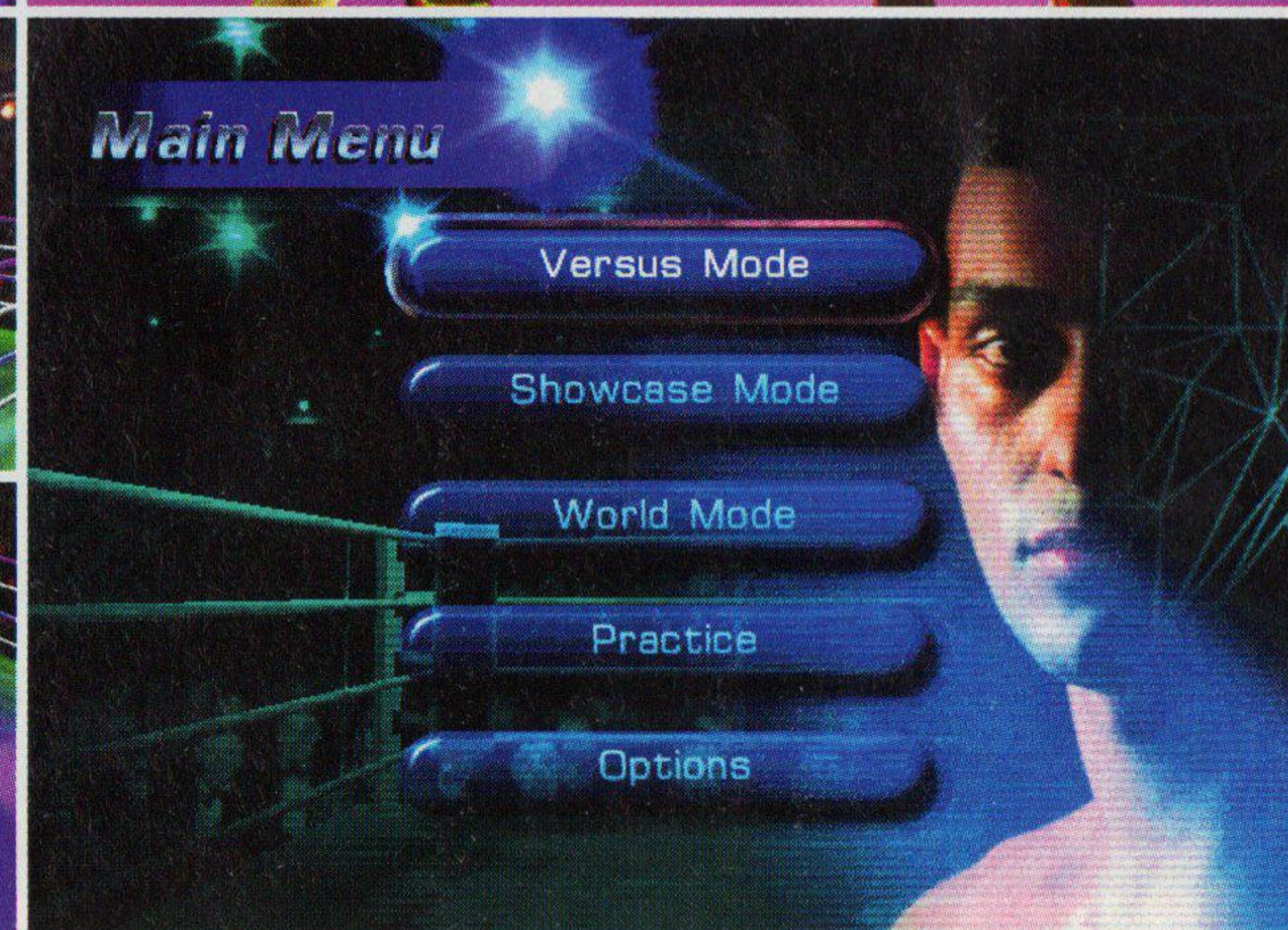
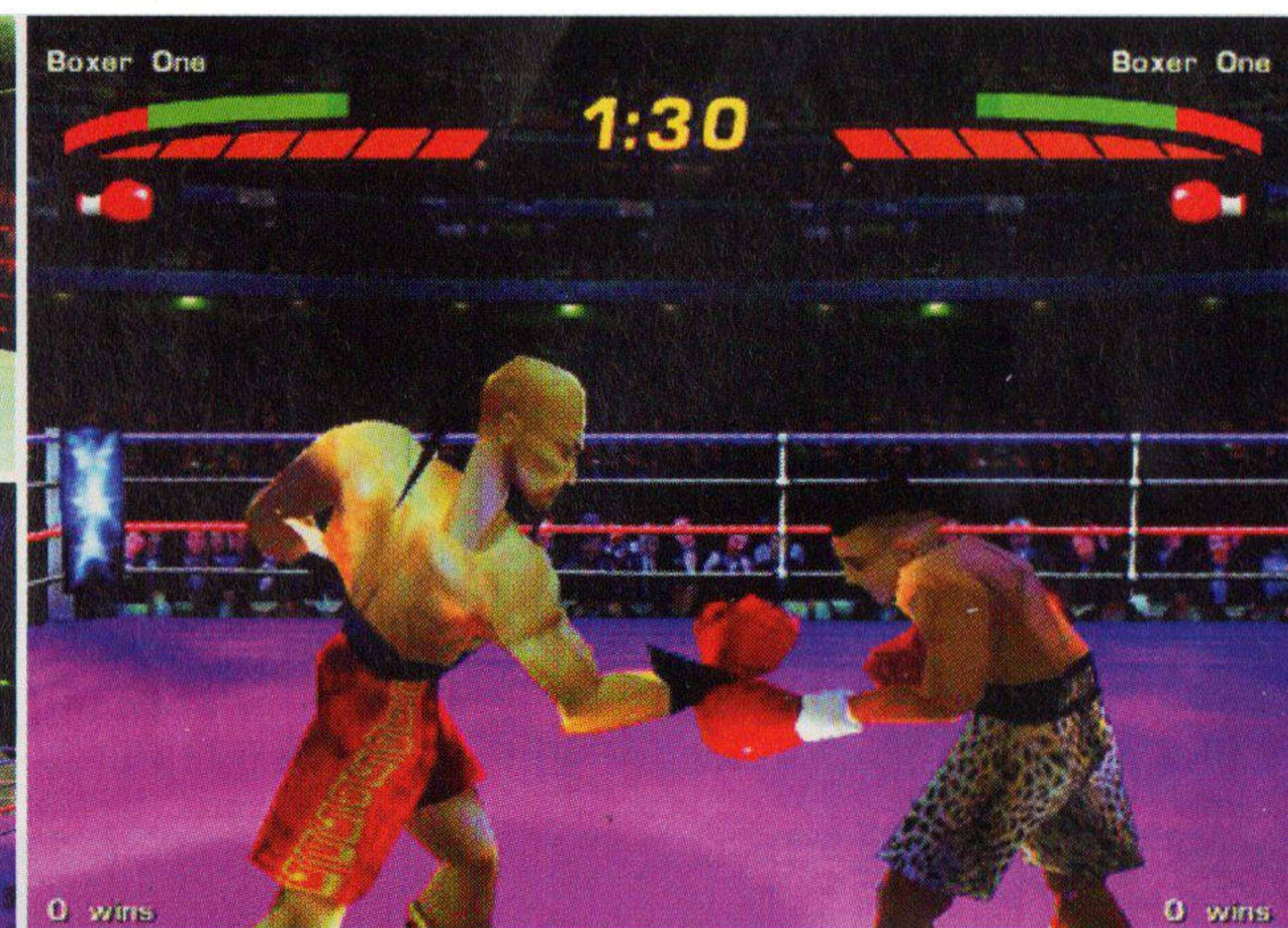
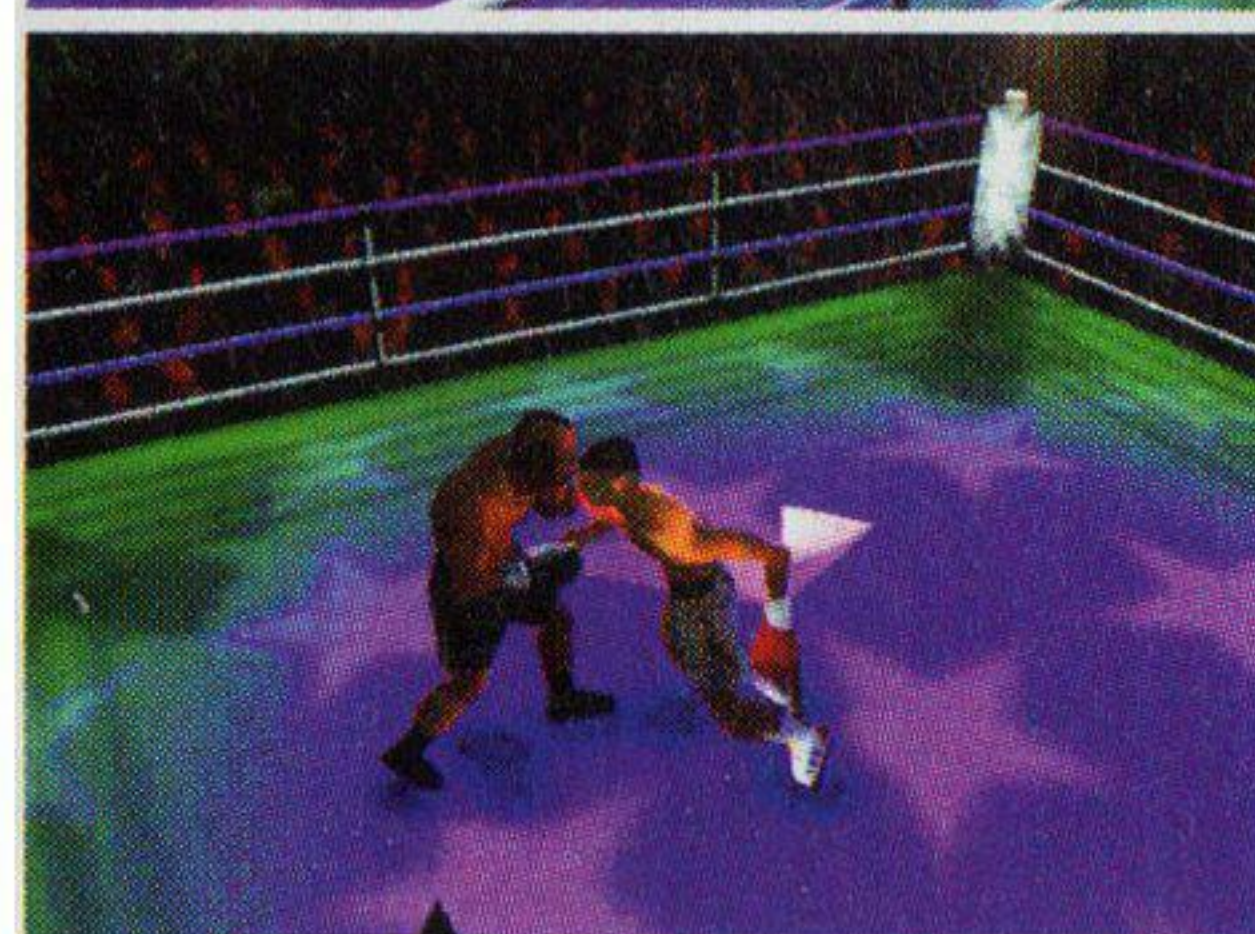
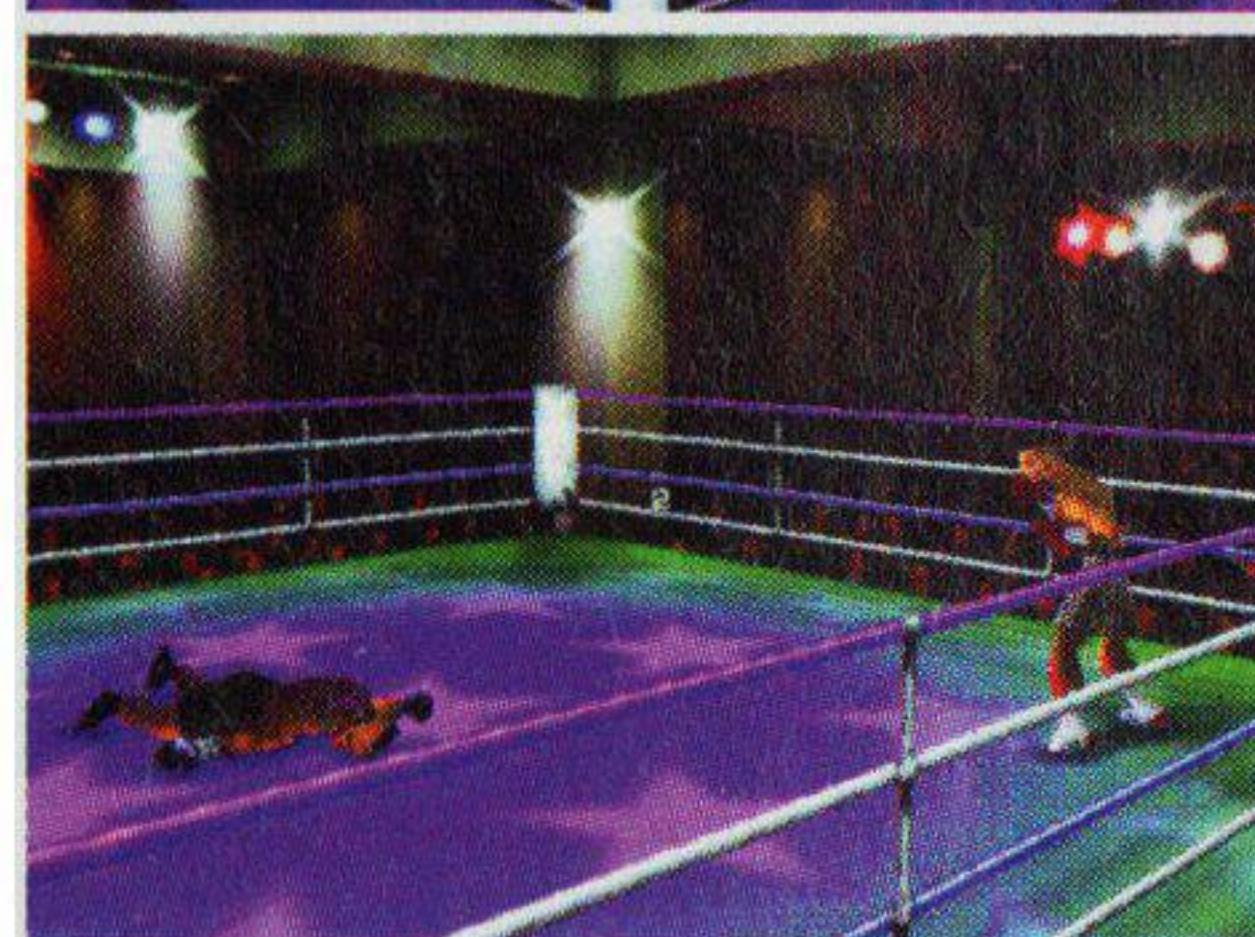
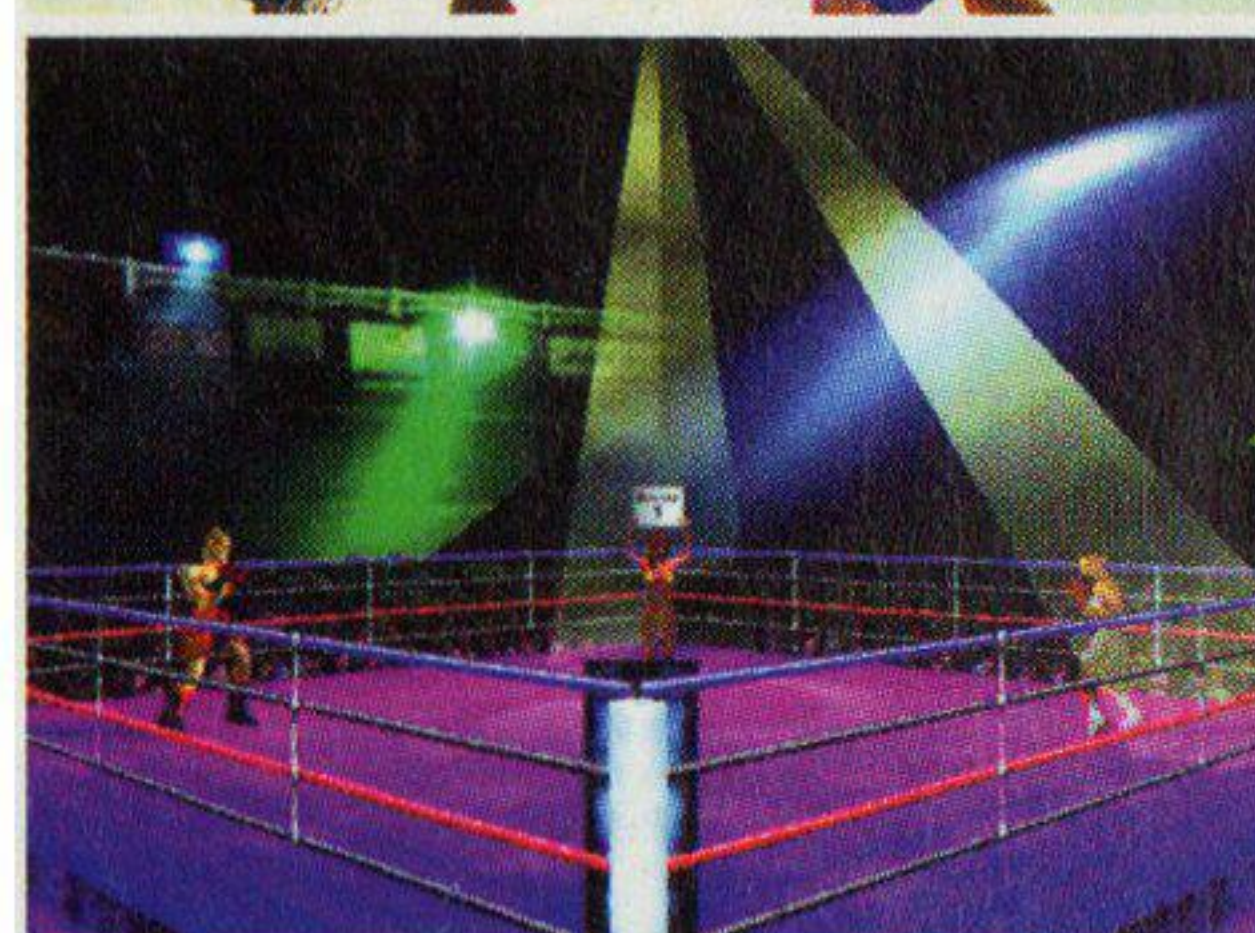
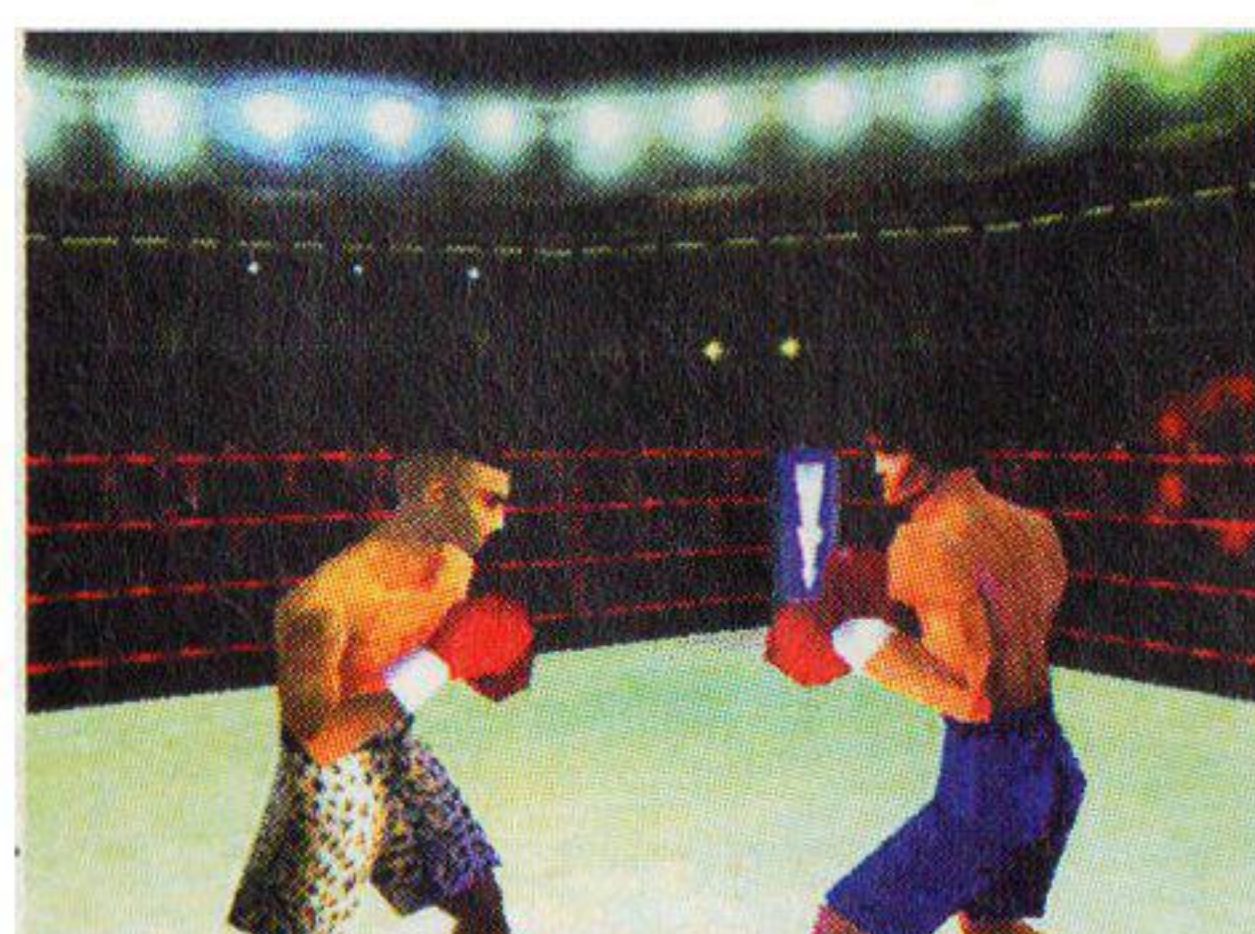
Codemasters develop new techniques for animation

Warwickshire-based developers and publishers

Codemasters have announced that their new boxing title, *Prince Naseem Boxing*, will feature new animation techniques.

The team working on the boxing title have developed a bespoke animation system that can manipulate the 800 polygon fighters. The system, which is based on kinematics, has the advantage of moving the characters more quickly and with snappier punches. "Motion capture techniques require the manipulation of massive amounts of data and, if used in boxing, would require up to 30 frames of animation for a straight punch," explained David Vout, the game's producer. "In contrast, we create complex, high explosive, trick shot-style punches in around eight frames."

Prince Naseem Boxing is set for a release in March on PlayStation. Expect a full review next issue.



SONY SELL RECORD

The end of November saw the Christmas rush kick-off in full for Sony when PlayStation sales broke all previous UK records, according to the computer giants. Official figures remain speculative, but it is thought that over 110,000 units were sold between 22nd and 28th of November. The combination of the new £99 price drop, impressive budget software support and strong retailer specific game bundles seem to have helped up the sales for the festive season.

SONY



INTERSTATE '82
ACTIVISION
CIVILIZATION:
CALL TO POWER
ACTIVISION
ALPHA CENTAURI
EA
ULTIMA
ASCENSION
EA
NASCAR
EA
D-JUMP
UBISOFT
SOUTH PARK
ACCLAIM
VIVA FOOTBALL
VIRGIN
TANKTICS
GREMLIN
SHADOW PACT
BLUE BYTE
ALIEN
INTELLIGENCE
INTERPLAY
F1 '99
PSYGNOSIS
MARCH
GUNSHIP III
MICROPROSE
HOMEWORLD
SIERRA
DAIKATANA
EIDOS
BRAVEHEART
EIDOS
CM3
EIDOS
ABOMINATION
EIDOS
HEAVY GEAR 2
ACTIVISION
SIM CITY 3000
EA



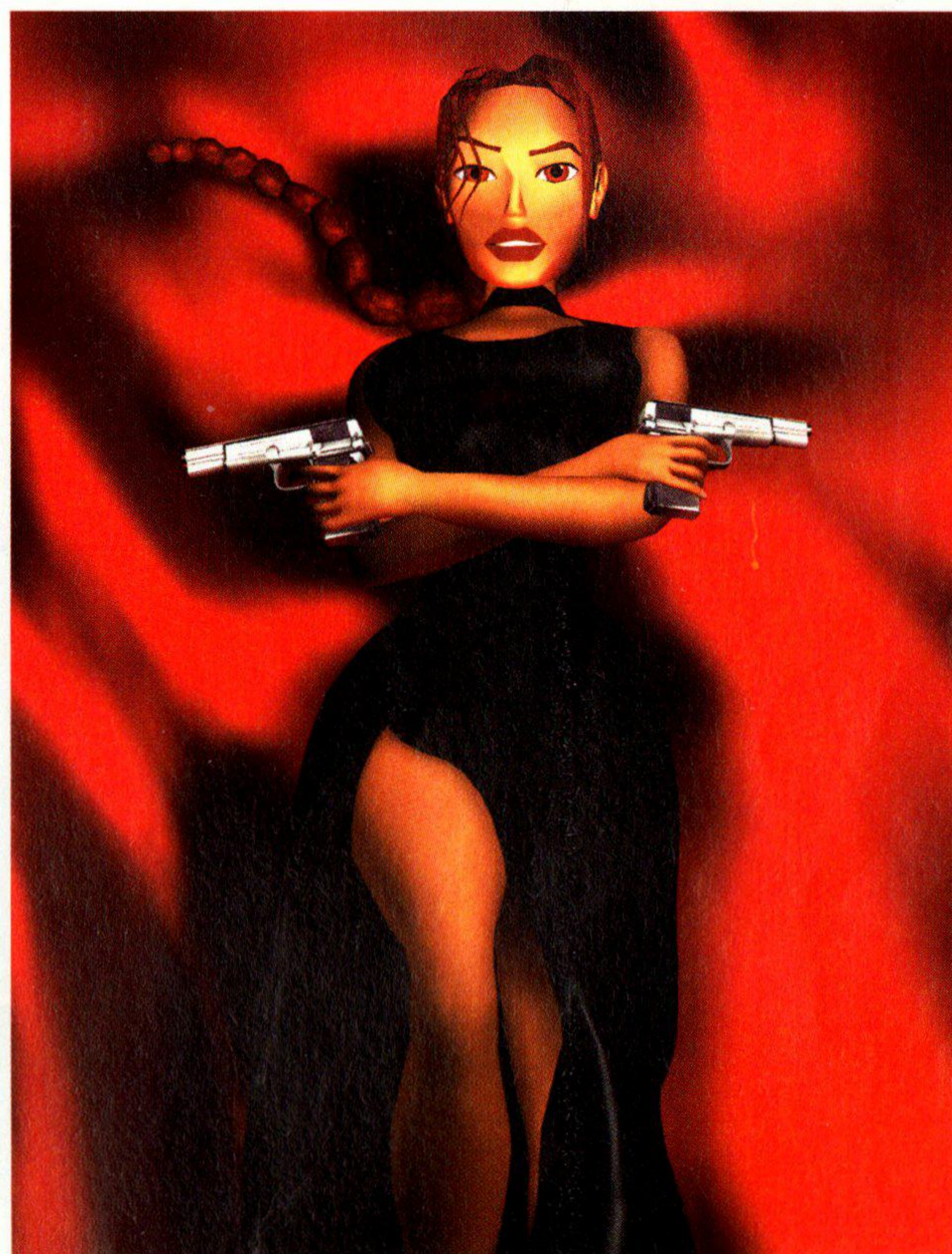
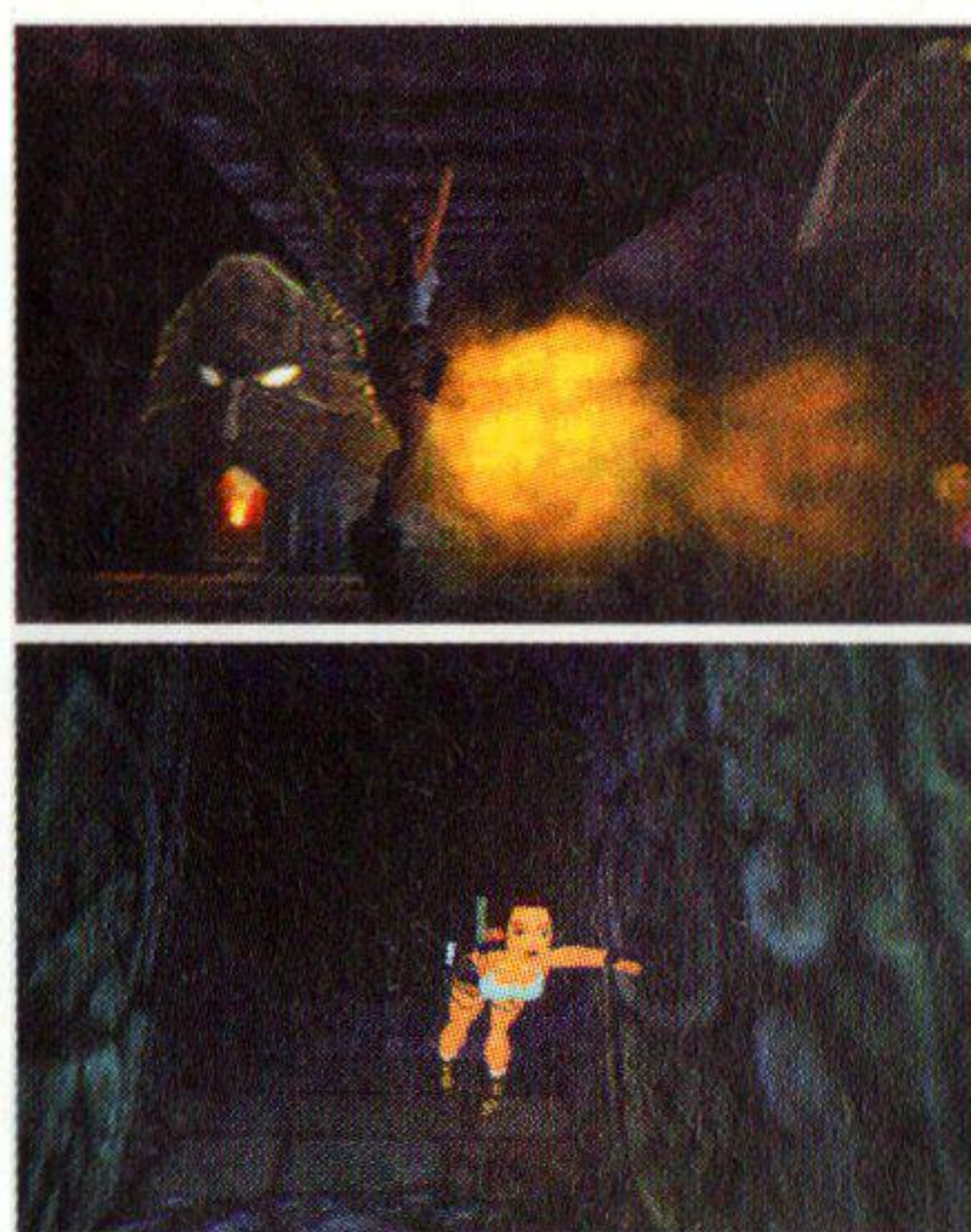
LARA CROFT, PHD.

Core Design's icon to become ambassador for British science

After last month's news of *Tomb Raider* being awarded millennial status, the mainstream hysteria surrounding Ms. Croft continues. Lara Croft has been chosen by Lord Sainsbury, British science minister, as a figurehead for Britain's science and technology sector. Lord Sainsbury told the BBC that "I want people when they think of this country to think of such scientific achievements as Thrust, the first supersonic car, and the Psion palmtop computer. I want Lara Croft to be an ambassador for British scientific excellence."

Jeremy Smith, managing director of Core Design, was rather upbeat about the announcement and was

perhaps a little over zealous about the cultural significance of Lara. He said that "Currently, she is almost part of the establishment as is 007, and providing we, as a company, don't decimate her character, there is no reason why she shouldn't go on for a long time."



NEW UNREAL ANNOUNCED

GT Interactive have officially announced two new *Unreal* games. The first is *Unreal Tournament*, to be released soon, and is basically a multiplayer version of the first game. The second game is the sequel to *Unreal*, only know as *Unreal II* so far. However, the game will not be developed by Epic MegaGames, the original game's developers. It will be coded by Legend Entertainment on Epic's behalf, using the *Unreal* engine, albeit with a few modifications. "We are excited to be working with Epic and GT on *Unreal II* and the *Unreal Level Pack*," said Legend boss Michael Verdu. "We have a talented creative and technical team applied to these franchise products. For *Unreal II*, we'll be combining new technology, innovative game design and Legend's strong art production capabilities to create a cutting edge action game. *Unreal* fans won't be disappointed by the results — this game is going to rock."

NINTENDO GOES SOFT

Big N announce deal with graphics company

Nintendo has revealed a new deal with Softimage to create new game development tools for the N64. Together the two companies will work on developing the NIFF (Nintendo Intermediate File Format) v2.0. This tool makes it possible for developers to use the Nintendo-supported standard N64 file format. NIFF v 2.0 will be based on Softimage's own 3D program, Softimage v3.8. Shigeru

Miyamoto, Nintendo's chief games designer, said "Softimage has provided development tools which have helped us challenge the current definition of interactive video game experiences while meeting the demands of our developers. For over four years, Softimage tools have contributed to several of our most successful titles with a graphical richness and intensity that would be difficult to achieve otherwise."

SOFTIMAGE® 3D

REPORTAGE

SONY LICENCE TO CHANGE

Investigations into Sony licensing bring a change of policy

Following similar inquests into Sega and Nintendo licensing rules, a procedural investigation by the European Union's competition watchdog has recently forced Sony to change their tune regarding their company rules on third party licensing. A spokesperson for Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE) stressed that, "the procedure was not carried out due to any complaints from either third party licensees or from consumers regarding pricing. The changes have been agreed, but are at present being kept private between SCEE and the other relevant bodies."



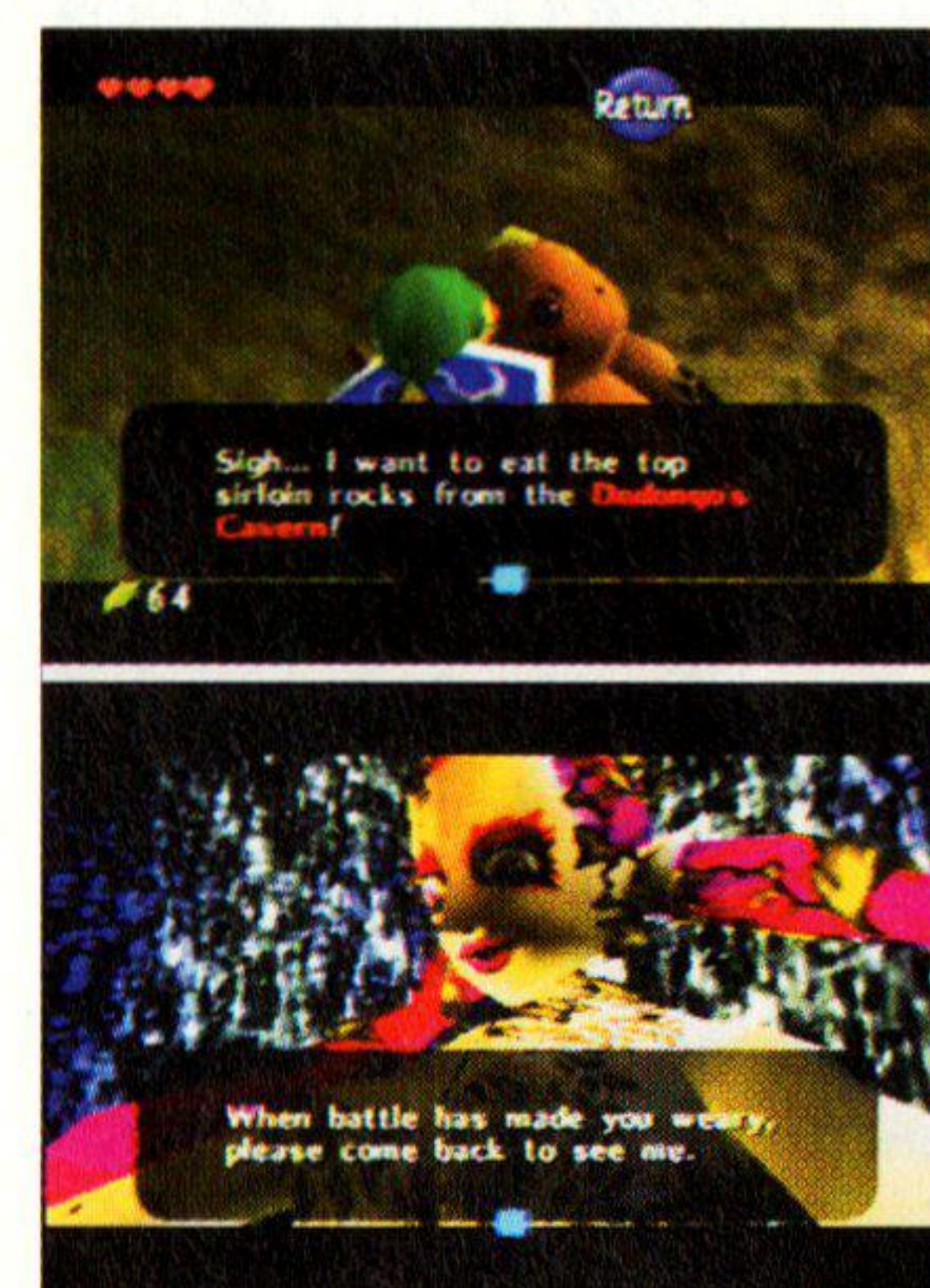
THE PROBLEM WITH ZELDA

Santa comes late as the biggest game of the year fails to meet demand

Nintendo's distributors, THE Games have been facing heavy criticism from game retailers after their inability to meet Christmas demand for *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. Even though it managed to make a Christmas release, the pressure has showed as the world-wide release of the

game paid heavy tolls on the cartridge manufacturers. THE games had originally planned shipments of 250,000 units, but the figure has dropped to 225,000 because of the need for the units in other areas of the world. In Japan the game sold 370,000 copies in only two days, while between November 23rd and

December 4th over a million copies of the game were sold in America. THE received a further 125,000 copies for the UK before Christmas and are planning to receive an additional 100,000 during January, so by the time you read this, the game should be on the majority of high street shelves.



ENOUGH TO GET THE ADRENALINE PUMPING

VM Labs' NUON project gathers momentum

Adrenaline Interactive have announced that they will be supporting the NUON. The company have a long history of developing video games, beginning with *Q*bert* in the early eighties. For NUON they will be concentrating on producing prototypes of new games for use in demonstrations. It is expected that many of the titles will be released sometime in 1999.

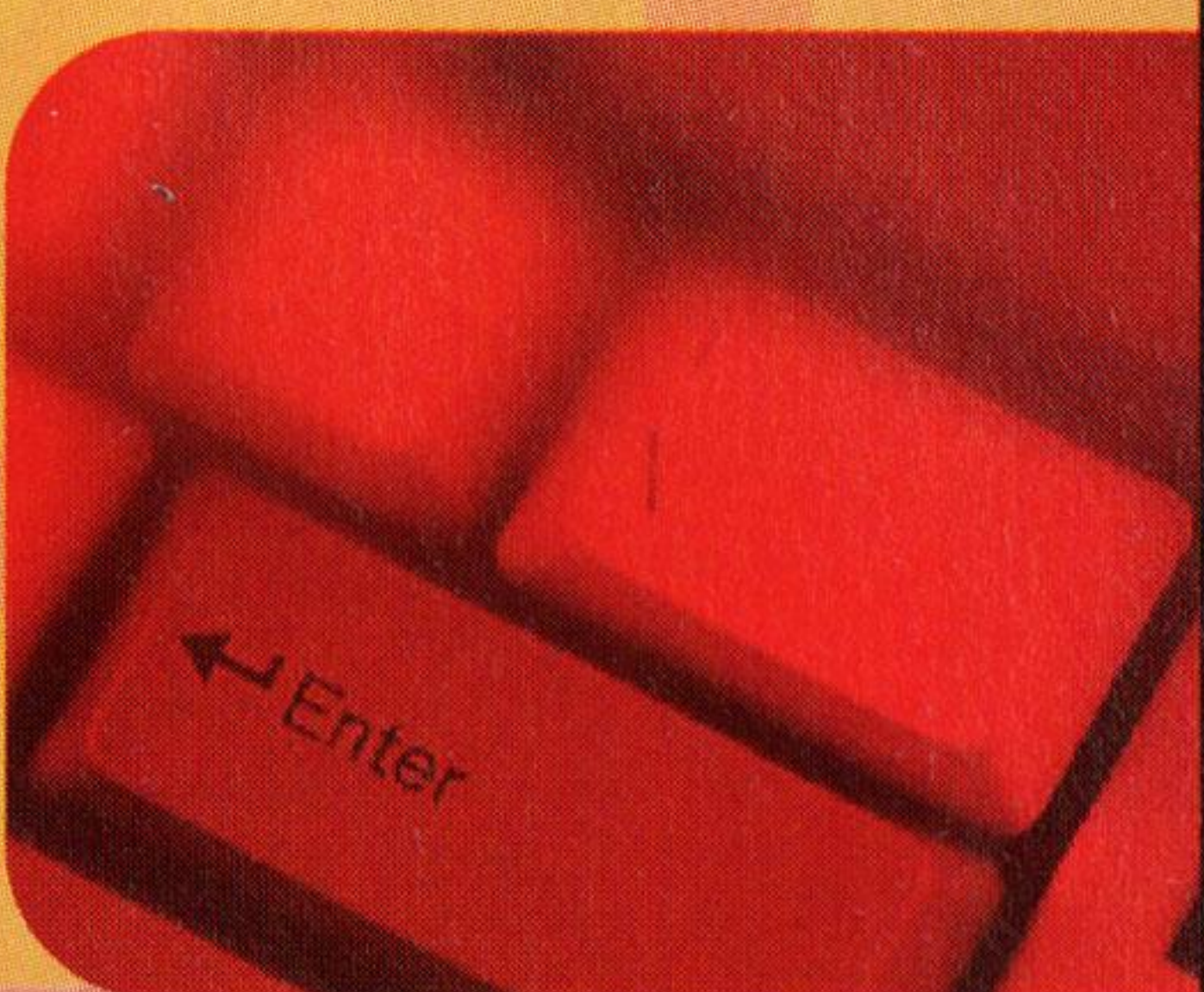
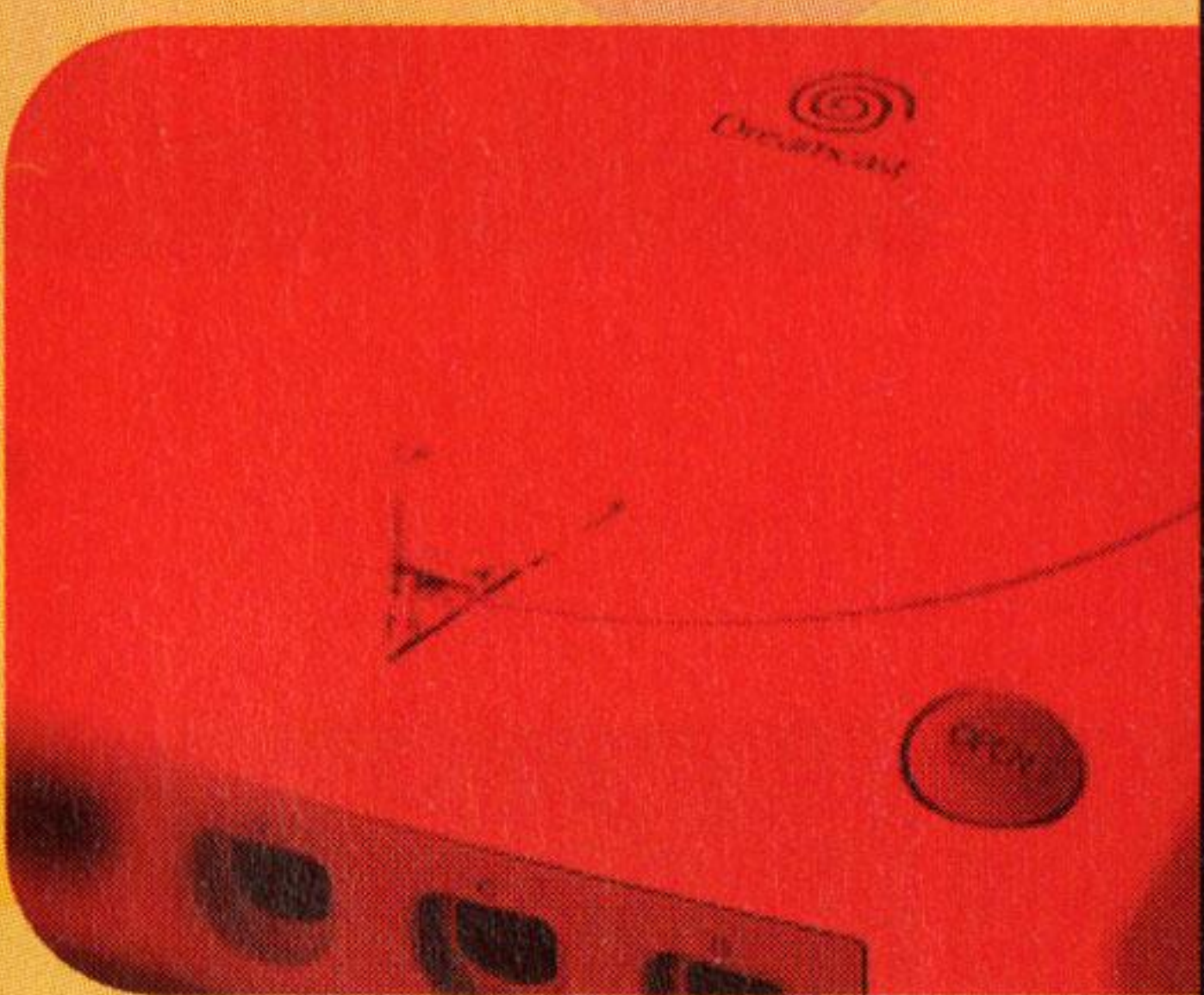
Jay Smith, CEO of Adrenaline Interactive, said, "NUON opens the market for a new type of interactive video entertainment system which combines the mass market penetration of typical consumer electronic devices with the broad appeal of interactivity and gaming. We are pleased to be working so closely with VM Labs as a prototype developer for this promising

new technology. It represents a significant expansion of our game market."

The NUON chipset works by enhancing existing DVD players and will allow users to play video games, educational DVD-ROMS and reference applications. No release for the device has been set for the UK, but we can confirm that it will be released some time during 1999.



NINTENDO 2000
Minoru Arakawa, president of Nintendo of America, has confirmed to Japanese industry newspaper, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, that they are indeed working on a new console. Apparently, the console will not appear until 2000 or even 2001, and Arakawa states that, "it is by no means certain that the next console will use cartridge ROM... We are currently researching all types of media to determine what is most suitable format, including DVD."



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AGE OF EMPIRES II
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EIDOS

SABOTEUR
EIDOS

UPRISING 2
UBISOFT

SHADOWMAN
ACCLAIM

MESSIAH
INTERPLAY

GIANTS
INTERPLAY



SU27 FLANKER 2.0
MINDSCAPE

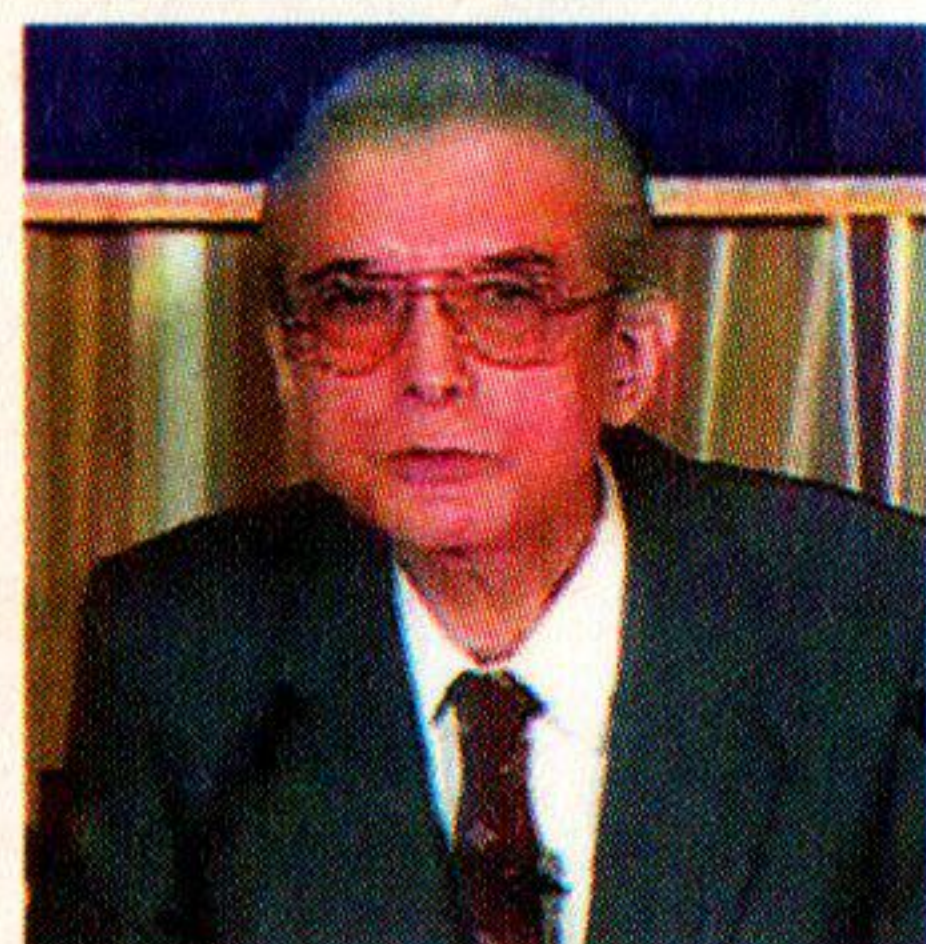
LEGACY OF KAIN:
SOUL REAVER
CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

JUNE
F1GP III
MICROPROSE

SEVEN KINGDOMS II
INTERACTIVE MAGIC

ANACHRONOX
EIDOS

X-WING: ALLIANCE
ACTIVISION



Hiroshi Yamauchi,
President of NCL

YAMAUCHI VERSUS THE CD-ROM

Nintendo's chief speaks out against piracy

In a recent interview, Hiroshi Yamauchi has spoken out against the level of piracy in the European market saying that, "cheap counterfeit CD-ROM games have increased so much in the European and US markets", and that, "this may drive out talented game creators and financially bankrupt the software companies."

He claims that the easy to

copy CD-ROM format is to blame for the increase in piracy over the last twelve months and figures show that 50% of all games sold in Europe are pirate copies. In the US, 10% of all games are pirate copies.

Yamauchi-sama went onto say that, "Nintendo 64's cartridges are much harder to copy, and this proves we made the right choice."

TWISTED HOLLYWOOD

Car combat game makes a jump onto the big screen

Twisted Metal, the hard-core game for the PlayStation, was one of the first of the car combat genre. Since its release in 1995, it has since spawned two sequels, the most recent of which may be facing a film conversion.

A bidding war to the rights of Twisted Metal 3 – The Movie is currently underway in America, with rumours of a six-figure

number being quoted. Although no actors have signed yet, it's likely to appear during the first half of 2000.



ALL THAT BLITTERS WINS GOLD

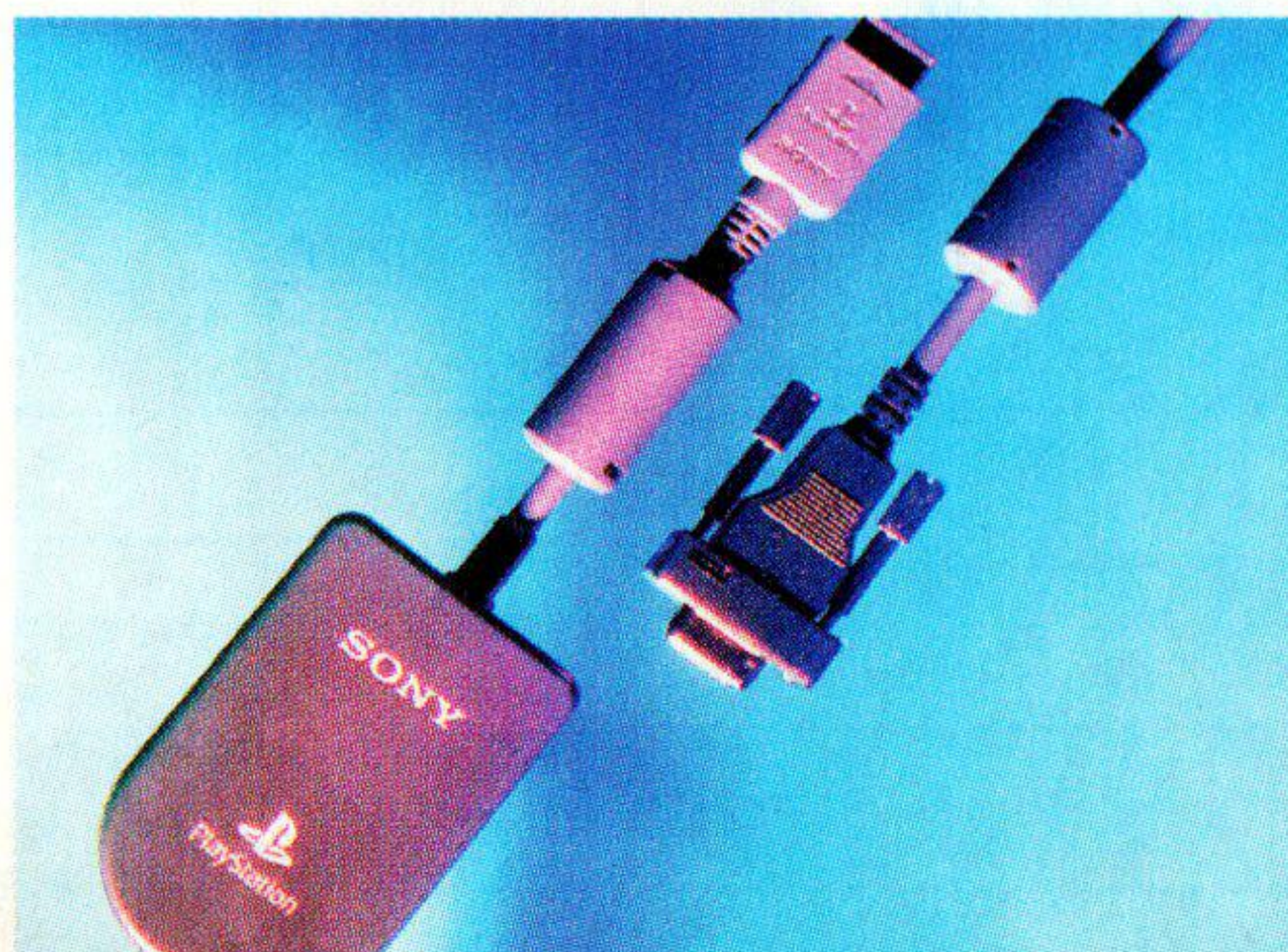
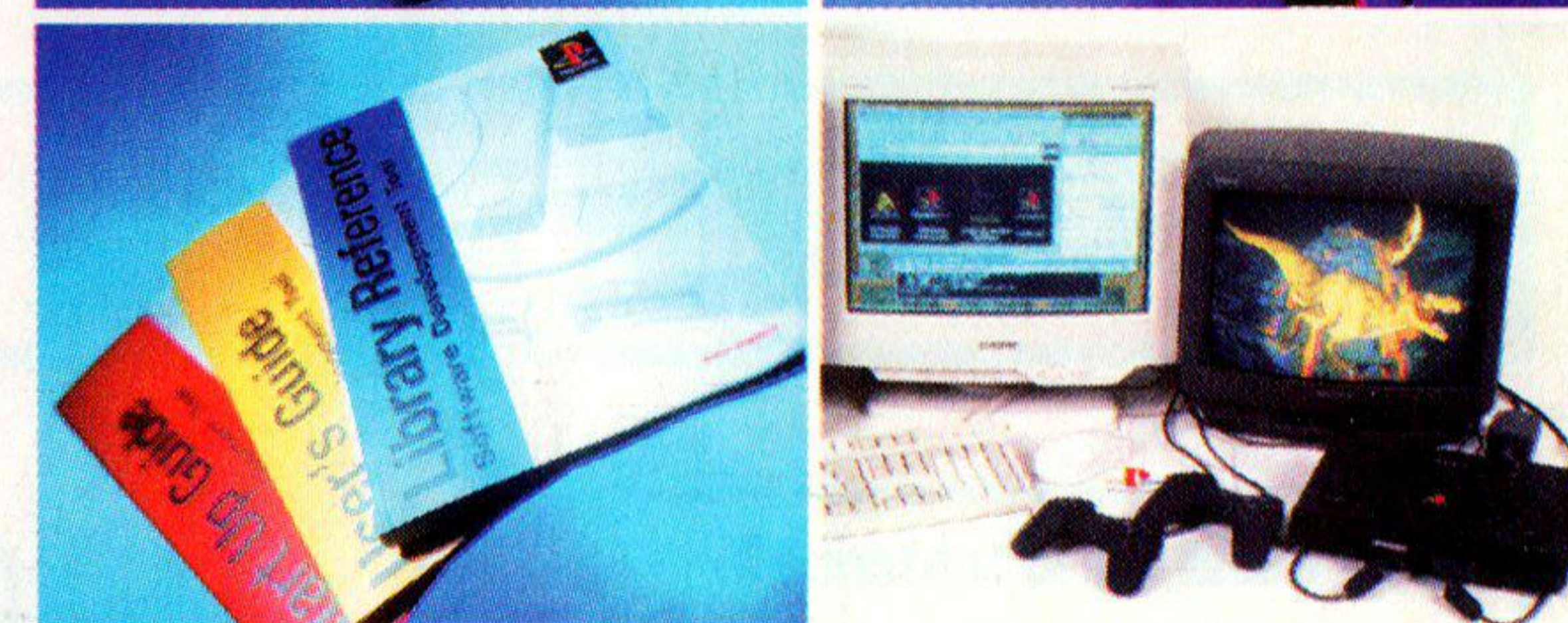
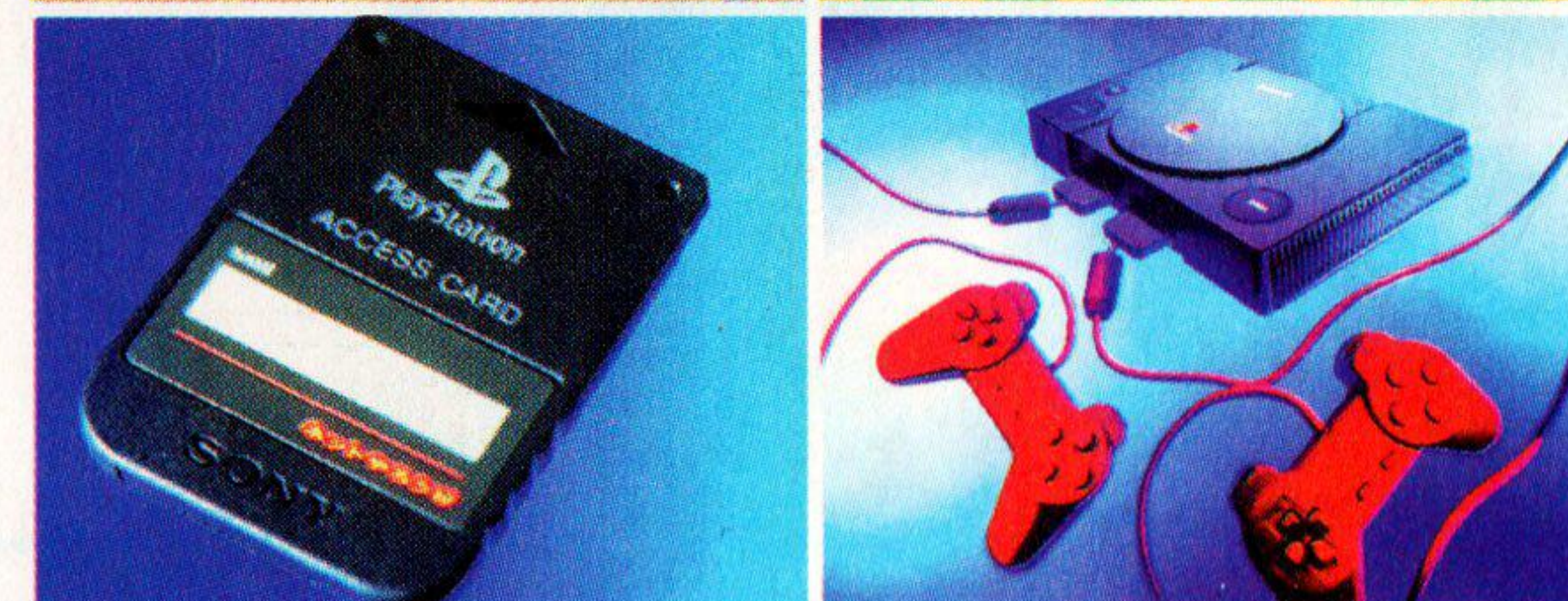
PlayStation Net Yaroze game wins GDUK '98 competition

The winner of the Net Yaroze competition for amateur game programming was announced by Sony recently at the Games Developer UK '98 show at Stirling Castle. Net Yaroze is a global project that gives anyone the chance to develop their own PlayStation software titles and is run by Sony.

The title that took 'Best Net Yaroze game' and 'Best overall game' was a very playable and light-hearted overhead shoot-'em-up called *Blitter Boy* that involved rescuing babies from

an advancing enemy threat. Chris Chadwick created the software in roughly twelve months and was awarded prize money totalling £6,000.

Net Yaroze packages – including a black Net Yaroze PlayStation, two controllers, software development tool disks and various user manuals, as well as exclusive access to the Net Yaroze web site – can be only be bought direct from Sony. For more information take a look at www.scee.sony.co.uk/yarinfo/index.html.



MARIO SIXTY-FORE!

Yet another Mario-endorsed product has been announced by Nintendo, and he's getting more diverse every time. The new game is called *Mario Golf 64*, so no prizes for guessing what kind of game it will be. Apparently, though, there are more than 108 holes on six courses. Players will also get to choose to play as one of ten characters from the *Mario* series. No news as to when the game will be released, but we expect it to be towards the end of 1999.

EARTHWORM
JIM 3D
INTERPLAY
NOCTURNE
TAKE 2



JULY
QUAKE III: ARENA
ACTIVISION
KINGPIN
INTERPLAY

GRAND THEFT
AUTO LONDON
TAKE 2

AUGUST
OMIKRON
EIDOS
BATTLEZONE 2
ACTIVISION

SEPTEMBER
INDIANA JONES
ACTIVISION
PRINCE OF PERSIA
3D
RED ORB

OCTOBER
CREATURES III
MINDSCAPE
GTA 2
TAKE 2

DECEMBER
FORCE
COMMANDER
ACTIVISION
GALLEON
INTERPLAY



CHARTS

ALL FORMATS

Produced in
association with



	Title	Publisher	Format
1	FIFA '99	Electronic Arts	PlayStation/PC
2	Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Eidos	Nintendo 64
3	Tomb Raider III	Eidos	PlayStation/PC
4	Crash Bandicoot 3	SCEE	PlayStation
5	V-Rally	Infogrames	PlayStation/GB
6	TOCA Touring Car	Codemasters	PlayStation/PC
7	Brian Lara Cricket	Codemasters	PlayStation
8	Spyro the Dragon	SCEE	PlayStation
9	Abe's Exoddus	GT Interactive	PlayStation
10	TOCA 2 Touring Cars	Codemasters	PlayStation/PC
11	Grand Theft Auto	Take 2 Int.	PlayStation/PC
12	Crash Bandicoot	SCEE	PlayStation
13	Colin McRea Rally	Codemasters	PlayStation
14	Tekken 3	SCEE	PlayStation
15	Small Soldiers	Electronic Arts	PlayStation/PC
16	Tomb Raider	Eidos	PlayStation/PC
17	Formula 1 '98	Psygnosis	PlayStation
18	Tomb Raider II	Eidos	PlayStation/PC
19	Hercules	Disney/SCEE	PlayStation/PC
20	WWF: Warzone	Acclaim	PSX/N64/Gameboy

PC CD-ROM

1	Tomb Raider III	Eidos
2	FIFA '99	Electronic Arts
3	Half-Life	Sierra
4	Combat Flight Sim	Microsoft
5	South Park (Desktop)	Telstar
6	Lego Creator	Lego Multimedia
7	Gangsters	Eidos
8	Colin McRae Rally	Codemasters
9	Titanic	Europress
10	MS Flight Sim '98	Microsoft

PLAYSTATION

1	FIFA '99	Electronic Arts
2	Tomb Raider III	Eidos
3	Crash Bandicoot 3	SCEE
4	Brian Lara Cricket	Codemasters
5	Spyro the Dragon	SCEE
6	TOCA Touring Car	Codemasters
7	Abe's Exoddus	GT Interactive
8	Crash Bandicoot	SCEE
9	Tekken 3	SCEE
10	Grand Theft Auto	Take 2

NINTENDO 64

1	Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Nintendo
2	1080 Snowboarding	Nintendo
3	F1 World Grand Prix	Nintendo
4	Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo
5	V-Rally	Infogrames
6	Mission: Impossible	Infogrames
7	Goldeneye 007	Nintendo
8	Super Mario 64	Nintendo
9	WCW/NWO Revenge	THQ
10	F-Zero X	Nintendo

US SALES CONTINUE TO BOOM

Software sales in the US continue to rise, compared to the same time last year. According to The NPD Group, sales are up 32% on the same time last year and have risen every month of 1998 - between 16 and 52 percent.

JANUARY
STAR WARS:
ROGUE SQUADRON
LUCASARTS



FIFA '99
EA SPORTS
SOUTH PARK 64
ACCLAIM



BUST-A-MOVE 3
ACCLAIM
PENNY RACERS
THQ

FEBRUARY
CASTLEVANIA
KONAMI



BATTLE TANX
3DO
WINBACK
KOEI

LOONEY TUNES:
SPACE RACE
INFOGRAMES

AIRBOARDIN' USA
ASCII ENTERTAINMENT

EXPENDABLE

UK Dreamcast developers reveal details of new game

Rage Software, developers of two of the Dreamcast's European launch titles, have announced details of their upcoming game, *Expendable*. The game is set in the year 3000, five hundred years after humankind has expanded throughout the galaxy, colonising many planets.

However, an unknown alien terror has begun invading our territory, destroying everything in their wake and making their way ever closer to Earth. It is your mission to eradicate the alien threat and track it down to its home world.

The game is basically a glorified shoot-'em-up which places the player (the obligatory lone space marine) in a variety of

indoor and outdoor locations with a huge arsenal of weapons. *Expendable* will also be playable over the Internet and has a host of specifically designed deathmatch levels.

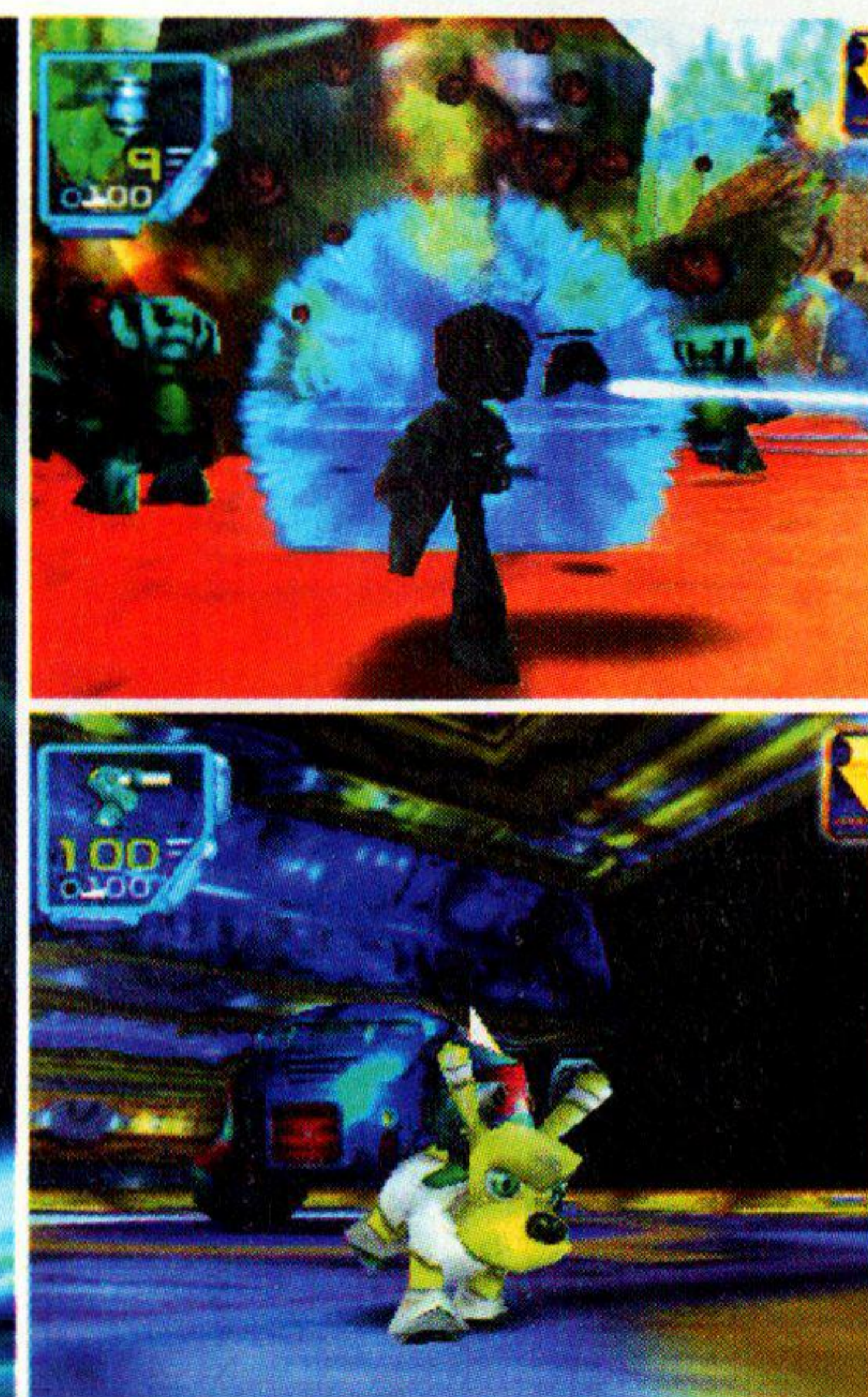
Environments include arid deserts, ancient ruins, beaches, industrial complexes, prison planets and a beautiful forest world. *Expendable* is set for a September release date, and we'll bring you more on this promising title as we hear it.



UPDATE: JET FORCE GEMINI

New screenshots have been released of Rare's N64 arcade shooter, *Jet Force Gemini*. The game takes place in an alternative universe during an interstellar war and features the exploits of two twins (hence the name)

who have to rescue the universe. Gameplay is mixture of shooting and puzzles and should provide a graphical tour de force for the N64. *Jet Force Gemini* is expected to be released in the UK in the second quarter of 1999.



QUAKE II
ACTIVISION

SUPERMAN

TITUS

SHADOWGATE 64:

TRIALS OF THE

FOUR TOWERS

KEMCO

MARCH

RAT ATTACK

MINDSCAPE

SURVIVOR:

DAY ONE

KONAMI

NBA IN THE

ZONE '99

KONAMI SPORTS

O.D.T.

PSYGNOSIS

VIGILANTE 8

ACTIVISION

RAMPAGE:

UNIVERSAL TOUR

MIDWAY

TONIC TROUBLE

UBI SOFT

MICRO MACHINES 64

CODEMASTERS

HYBRID HEAVEN

KONAMI



MONACO GRAND

PRIX

UBI SOFT

APRIL

SHADOW MAN

ACCLAIM

TOTAL CONTROL TAKES A LOOK AT THIS MONTH'S BEST GAME DEMOS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD FROM THE INTERNET

TOP TEN PC DOWNLOADS

1

Thief: The Dark Project - <http://demos.ign>

2

Decent 3 - <http://demos.ign>

3

Rogue Squadron - www.download.com

4

Heavy Gear II - <http://demos.ign>

5

Settlers III - <http://demos.ign>

6

g1D00M (Patch) - www.download.com

7

FIFA 99 - www.download.com

8

Alpha Centauri - alpha.owo.com/index2.html

9

Myth II - www.download.com

10

Motorhead (3DFX) - www.download.comBUCK BUMBLE
READS TOTAL
CONTROL!

6ft high bee sighted in the West End

Buck Bumble, star of UbiSoft's newest bee shoot-'em-up, was seen reading a copy of issue two of Total CONTROL. Imagine our delight at this wonderful endorsement from one of the industry's most popular insects. Unfortunately for UbiSoft's Louise Gabriel, our amazement didn't last long... and when the Editor of one of our sister mags, Total 64, came skipping along telling us how Buck Bumble was seen reading a copy of his magazine, the elaborate hoax was rumbled. Nice idea Louise, but you'll have to get up a lot earlier in the morning to get one over on us. We'll print the pic anyway...



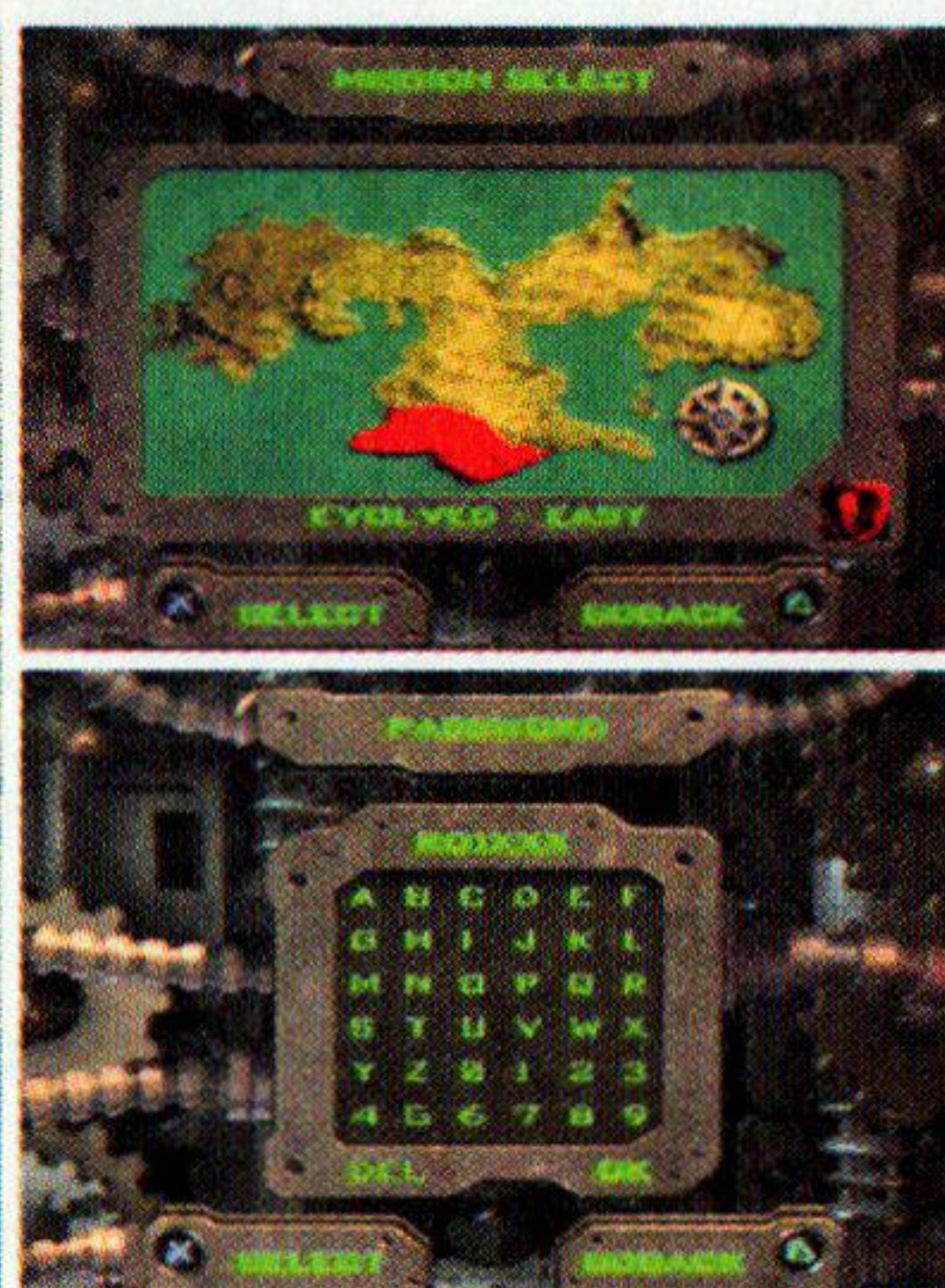
PLAYING WITH KROSSFIRE

Melbourne House convert PC real-time strategy to PlayStation

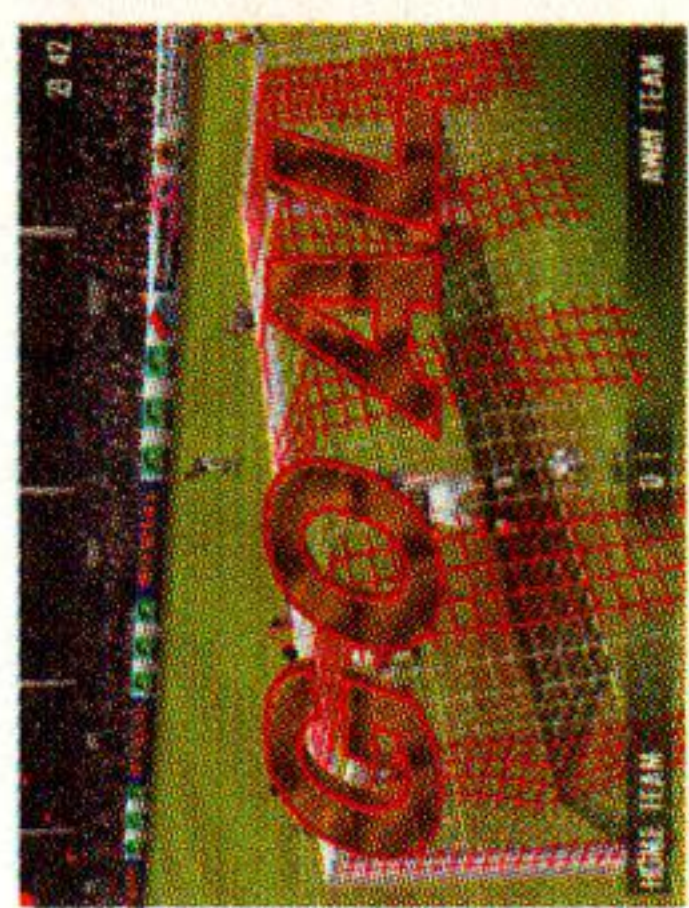
KKND (Kill Krush 'N' Destroy) Krossfire was released onto the PC in the first half of '98. The sequel to the original KKND boasted a three-way war scenario with players being able to take control over any of the

different races and lead them to victory. This takes place over 45 single player missions, with many varied units and pre-rendered mission briefings, but the most exciting feature is the two-player split screen mode, which can either be a

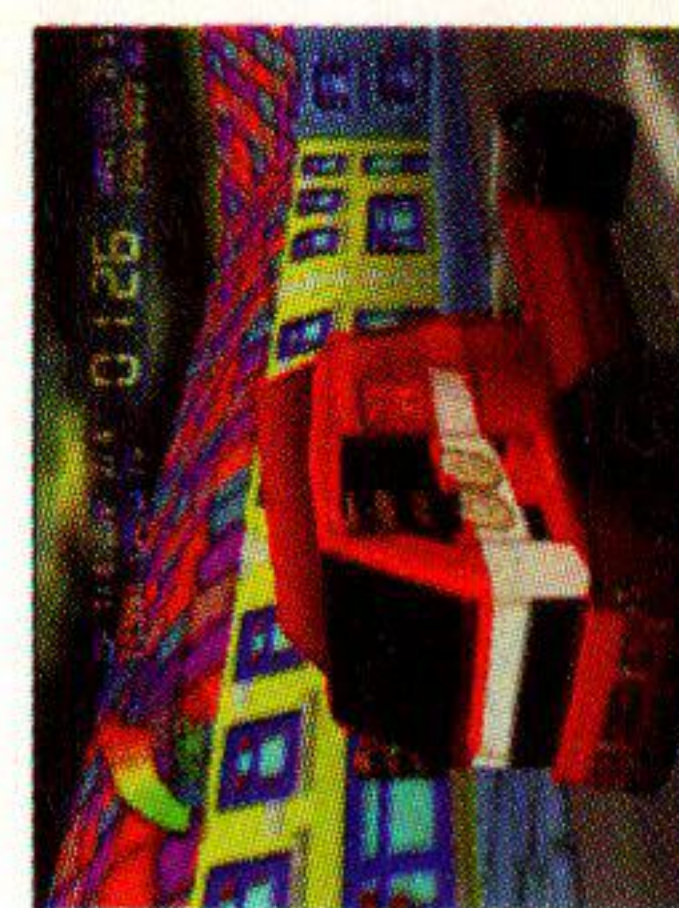
competitive or co-operative game, with five dedicated maps. Although KKND Krossfire did not meet huge success on the PC, the PlayStation has had much less competition in the genre, and it should be a big hit when released next year.



4X4 MUD
MONSTERS
TAKE 2/GOD
ROADSTERS '99
TITUS
SNOWBOARD KIDS 2
ATLUS SOFTWARE
MICHAEL OWEN'S
WORLD LEAGUE
SOCCER '99
EIDOS SPORTS



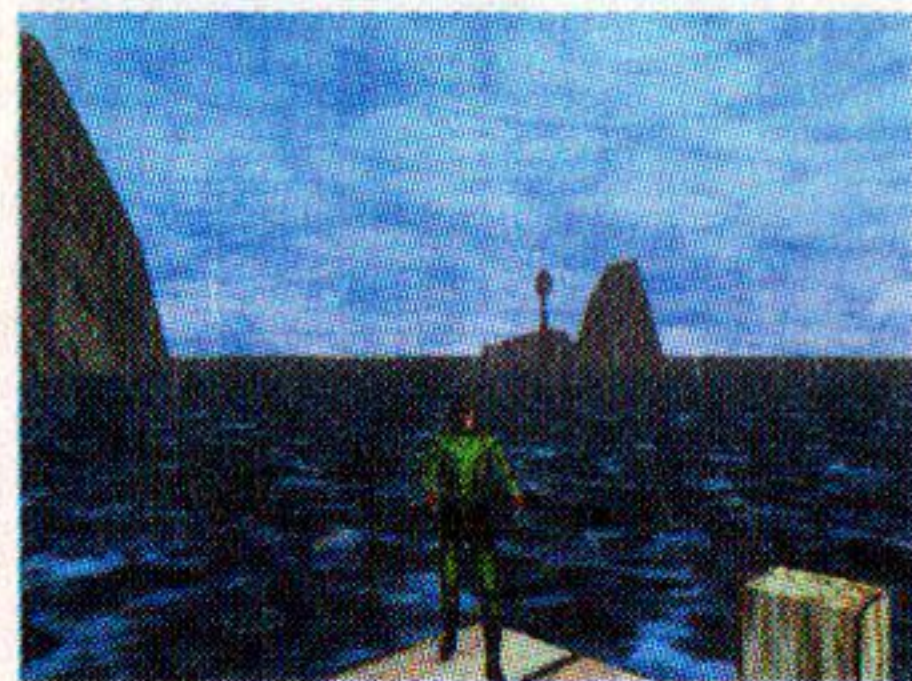
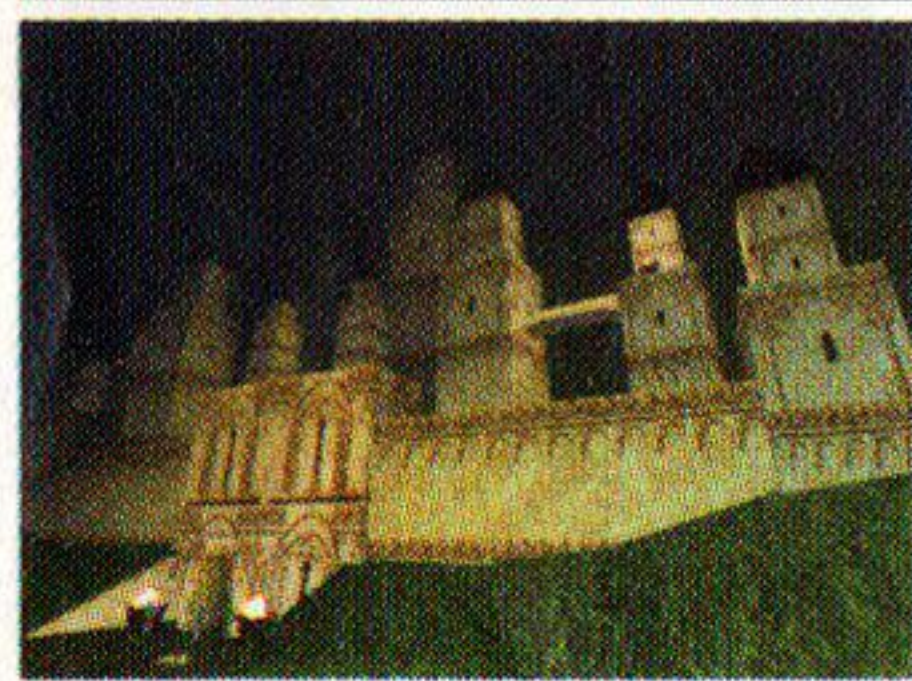
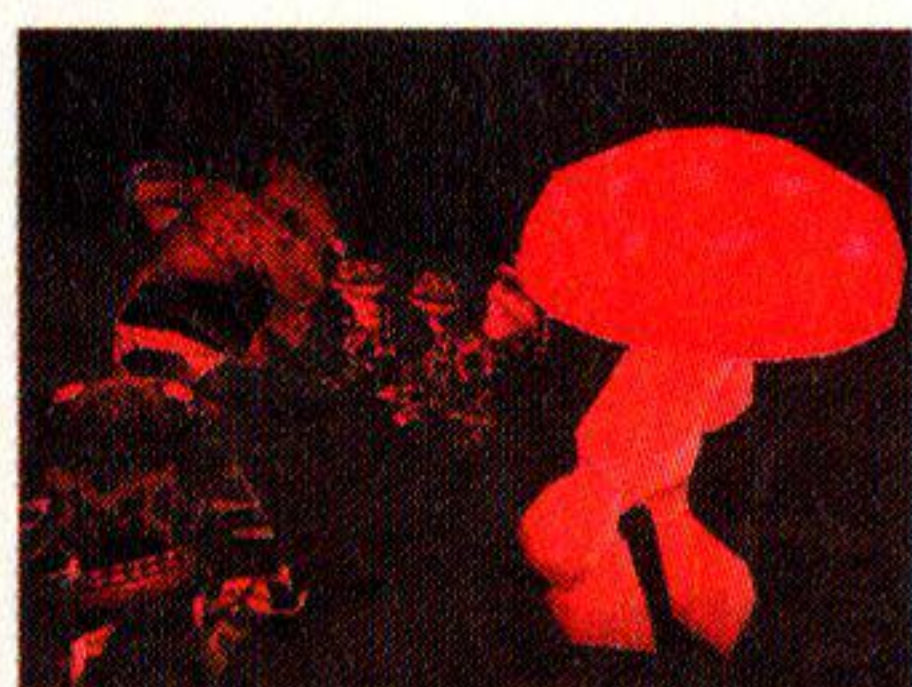
MAY
STAR WARS:
POD RACER
NINTENDO
RAYMAN 2: THE
GREAT ESCAPE
UBI SOFT
CARMAGEDDON 64
INTERPLAY SPORTS



WILD METAL
COUNTRY
GREMLIN



UPDATE: THE BEST: EVERQUEST



MUD stands for Multi-User Dungeons/Dimensions. Basically they are the next step up in the evolution of the early text-based adventures that were born back in the years of the Spectrum. Taking place over the net, players could log on and move around the environment, engaging in text-based conversations with any other on-line players that were near. *EverQuest* takes this idea one step further by including a huge real-time graphical setting.

Gamers must purchase copies of the game in a regular high street store instead of downloading it from the Net, then log-on to a foreign server (that will run 24 hours a day, seven days a week) in order to play. This will also be where all of their character and game information will be stored. When in the game, a sprawling RPG much like any other begins – the difference is that the

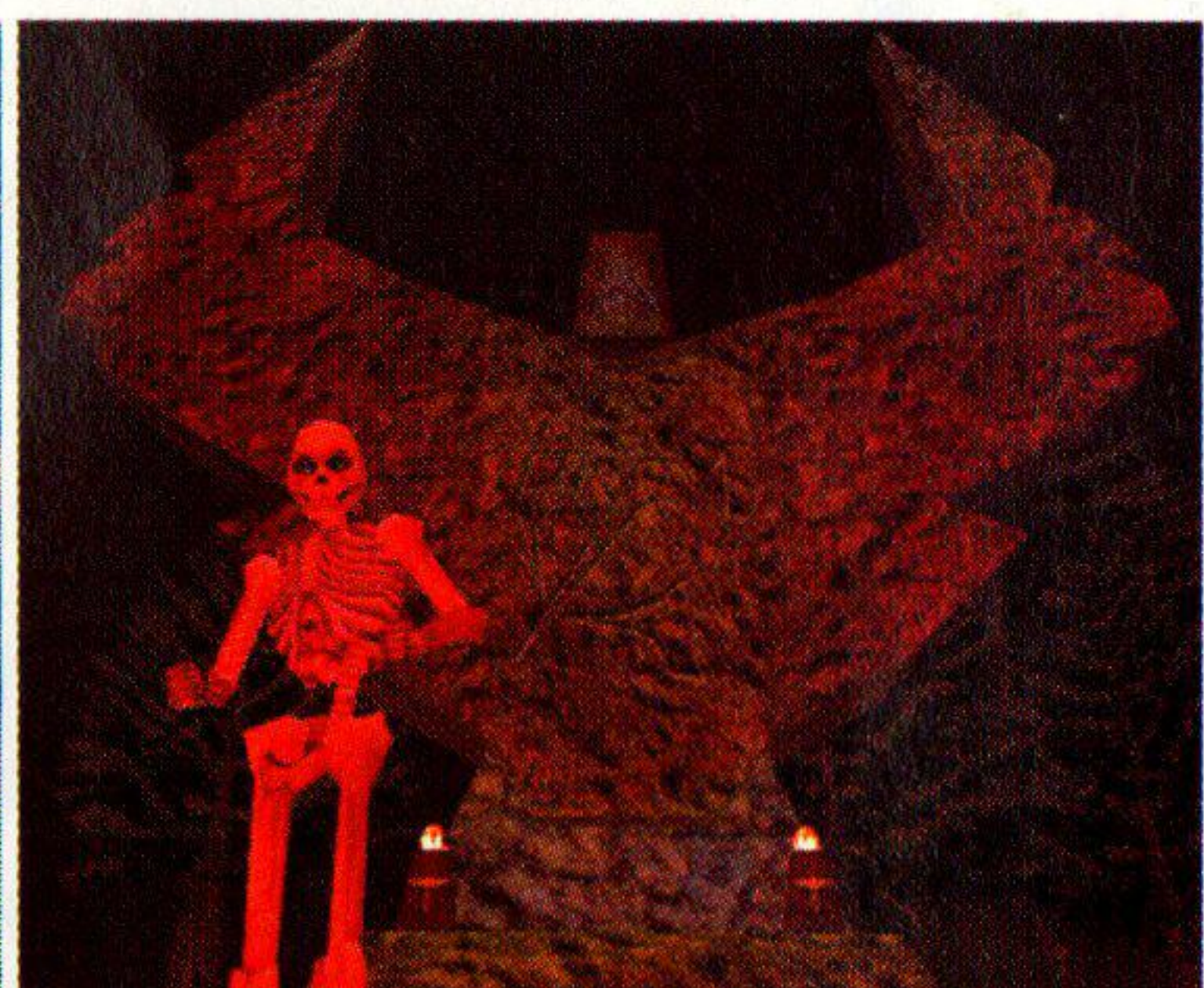
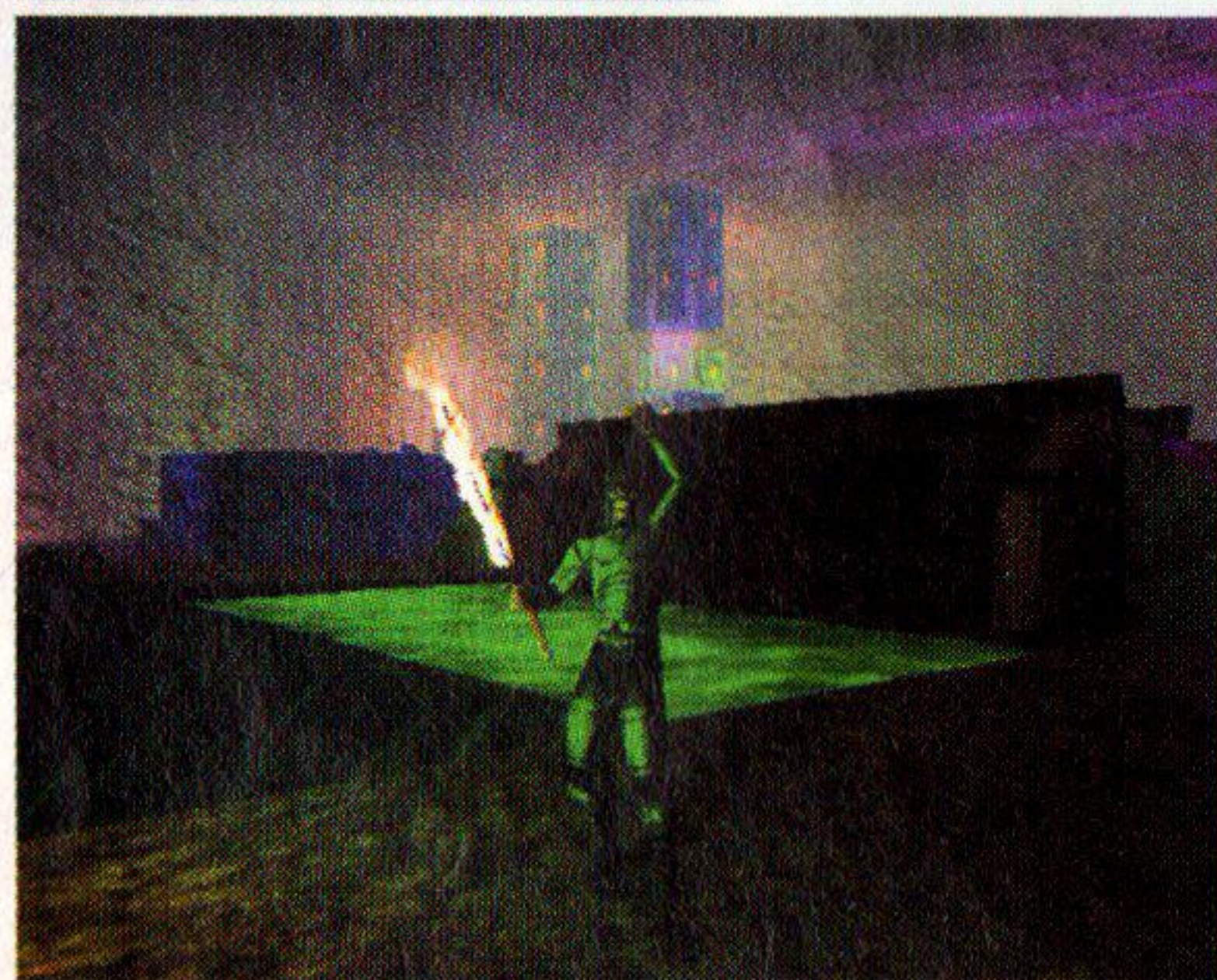
majority of the other characters are all human controlled.

The game itself is vastly detailed, with numerous quests to embark on, and new skills and magic to be learnt. Players can group up to improve their chances of survival, even form their own guild or army. Should you be particularly successful you could even attempt to take over a town and enforce your own laws. Bulletin boards provide a means of communication between players, where you can ask for help or even offer your own quests for the other players. Communication to those around you can either be directed to a particular person, or shouted out to the immediate population.

Combat will be a mixture of real-time and turn-based fighting, but the emphasis will be on statistics rather than pure reaction time. Because of the infinite game time and the impossibility of

saving, characters will never be completely terminated in the game, but they can be killed and later reborn, though their character will be much weaker than before. You can also toggle between aggressive (where you can attack or be attacked by other human players) or defensive (only combat CPU enemies) modes, though certain actions will automatically switch you from one to the other (i.e. healing a player while he is in combat with another, or grave robbing etc.). In the event of a system crash (or faking one when you are about to die in combat) your player will remain in the game world for a few more minutes and automatically fend off attacks, though with reduced skill.

EverQuest looks to be a very well thought-out game – the only worry is that we may all lose a large portion of our life after its commercial release. For more information check out www.tanarus.com.



NEED FOR SPEED 64
ELECTRONIC ARTS
RUGRATS BOARD
GAME
THQ
JUNGLE BOTS
TITUS
ALL-STAR TENNIS '99
UBI SOFT SPORTS
DUKE NUKEM:
ZERO HOUR
GT INTERACTIVE

SUMMER '99
HARRIER 2001
VIDEO SYSTEM
CHARLIE BLAST'S
TERRITORY
KEMCO
ASSAULT
TELSTAR
RE-VOLT
ACCLAIM
MYSTICAL NINJA:
GOEMON 2
KONAMI
JEST
INFOGRAMES
EARTHWORM JIM 3D
INTERPLAY
HYPE - A TIME
QUEST
UBI SOFT
NINTENDO ALL-
STAR DAI-RANTOU
SMASH BROTHERS
NINTENDO

WWF ATTITUDE
ACCLAIM SPORTS



MIDWAY UNLEASH WAR ON NINTENDO

N64 prepares for the biggest multiplayer game since Goldeneye

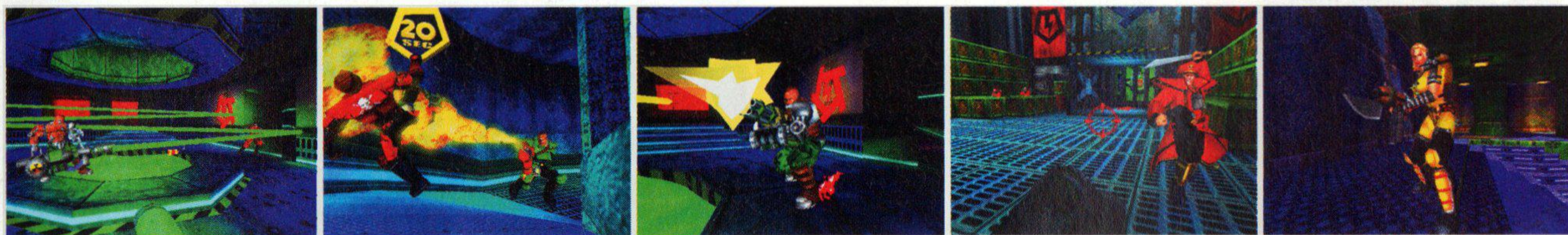
Midway title *War: Final Assault* was designed for the arcades using the latest Voodoo II accelerators. Essentially it's a first-person shooter, but the emphasis has been strongly placed on the multiplayer element. After the disappointment of *Turok 2*'s multiplayer mode, claims of a potential *Goldeneye* beater won't be enough to start us drooling with

anticipation, but it's certainly enough to catch the eye.

With the Russian Federation in turmoil, the Irkutsk Free Republic have declared independence and attacked the surrounding area. After the Russian republic throw countless failed raids into the enemy territory, they discover that the enemy have created new technology far more advanced than their own. You, as one of the four

main characters in the game, must make a daring raid into the enemy territory and vanquish the threat. The game will house both a 1-4 player co-operative and Vs mode with a multitude of weapons (twelve in total) and fourteen huge deathmatch arenas. Players will also only be able to carry one weapon at a time, and will be forced to drop the one they currently hold should they pick up a new one.

Midway have gone right back to step one in creating the game for the N64, developing all new development tools for the game. It's good to know that the frame rate and speed of the game are considered to be top priority – both of which are important features in all multiplayer games. You can be sure that we'll be following the development of this one closely in the future.

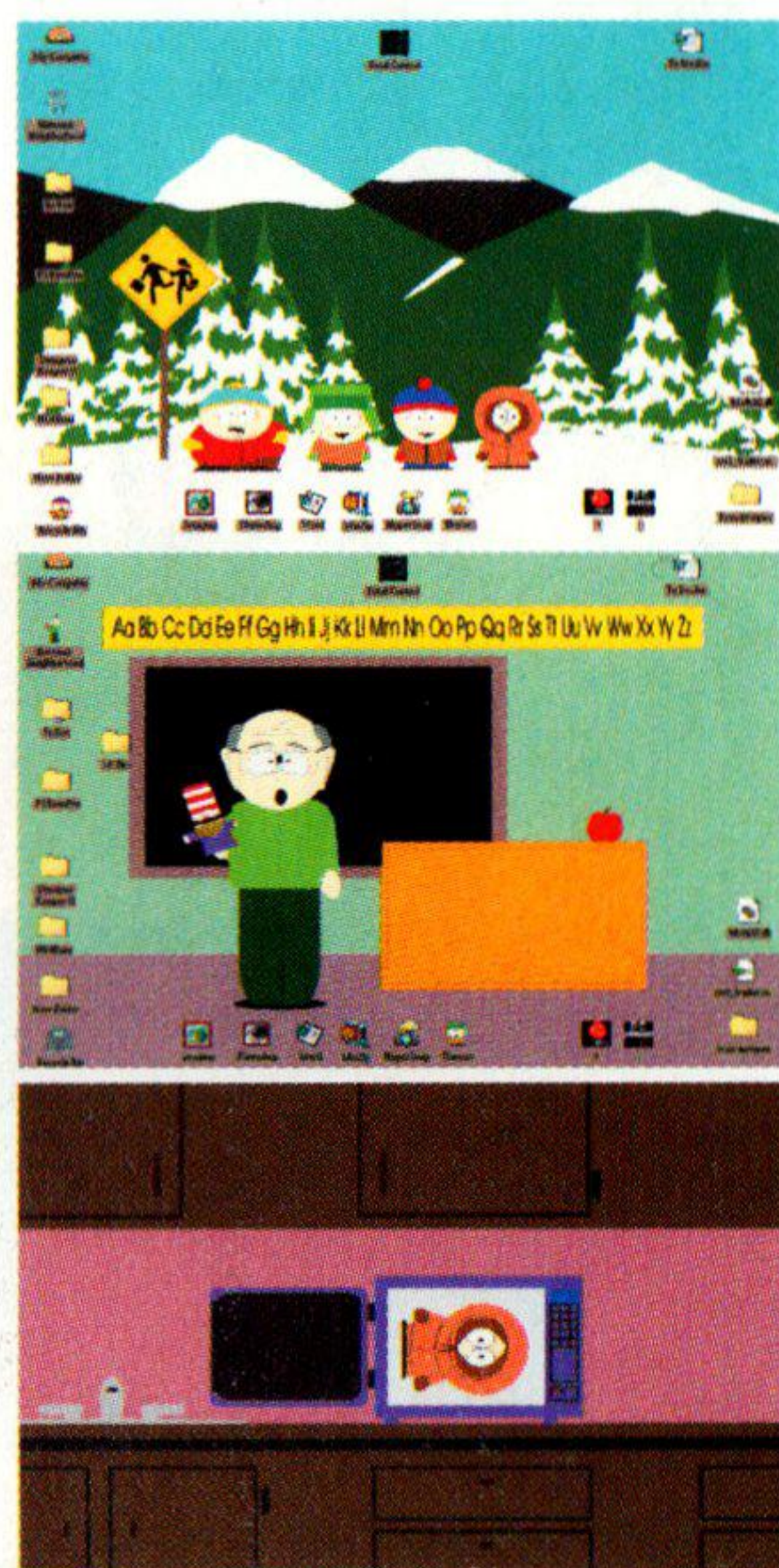


LIVE THE PARK LIFE FROM YOUR PC

South Park desktop themes kicks ass

Rarely does a PC desktop theme and screensaver generate any significant amount of excitement in the Total CONTROL office, but the South Park package is a bit of an exception. Now when we start work in the morning we can be greeted by Kyle, Stan, Cartman and Kenny. The package includes hundreds of soundbites from the show that can replace the dull clicks and chimes from your Microsoft set-up, a daily South Park calendar, animated icons and cursors, and loads of varied screensavers including the Kenny death montage, cows & aliens, and Kenny's diarrhoea. Plus there's a festive set-up featuring Mr Hanky the Christmas Poo, and even a shuffle option which re-arranges the whole set-up every time you restart.

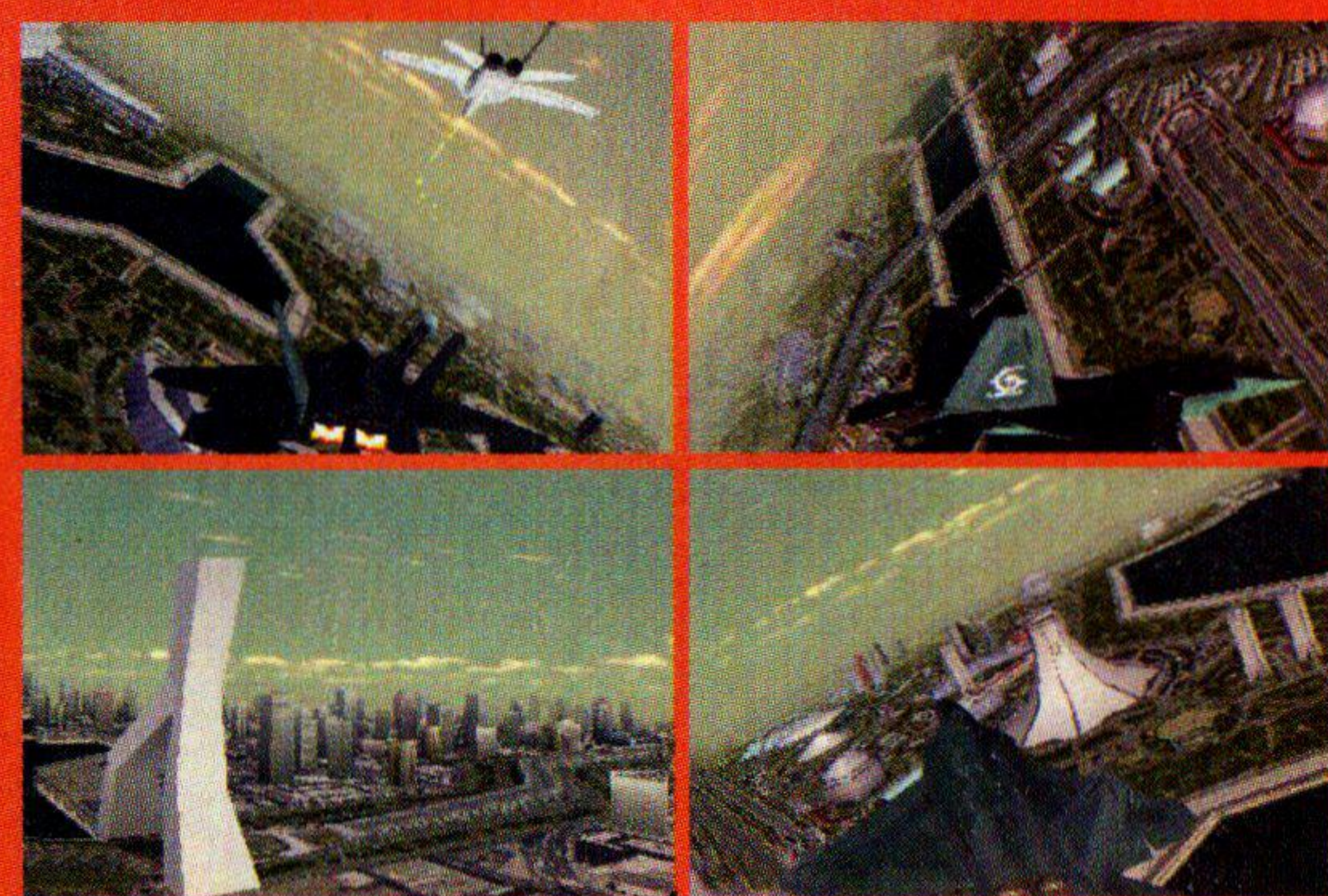
The South Park Desktop Theme and Screensaver is available now, priced £19.99.



I BELIEVE I CAN FLY

PlayStation to see new flight sim from Namco

Ace Combat 3: Electrosphere from Namco is the latest instalment of the popular jet warfare series. Details of the new game are sketchy, but from the screenshots that have been released, the game looks set to be a big graphical improvement over the previous titles. At the moment details have only been announced for the city-based landscape, but the game will contain many more. Available craft include the YF-22 and YF-23 Advanced Tactical Fighters. The game will be released in Japan during the first half of '99.



THE ULTIMA IN ONLINE

Ultima Online is officially the best-selling Internet-only game ever. According to sources, over 100,000 people are currently playing the game at the moment and paying \$10 a month for the pleasure. Apparently over 50% of them are playing at least once a day. "*Ultima Online* has truly set the standard by which other online-only games will be judged, from both a technology and a sales standpoint," said EA's boss, Larry Probst. "We have been surprised and pleased with the product sales and longevity of this game. We have thousands of players who play daily – and have done so for more than a year. It's truly remarkable. From a business perspective, *Ultima Online* has proven to be a winner. If *Ultima Online* was a separate, standalone company, it would be one of the few profitable Internet ventures today."

RONALDO SOCCER
INFOGRAMES SPORTS

CALIFORNIA SPEED
MIDWAY

BLUES BROTHERS
2000

TITUS

**TASMANIAN
EXPRESS**
INFOGRAMES

JET FORCE GEMINI
RARE



ARMY MEN 3D
3DO

SEPTEMBER

NFL BLITZ 99

MIDWAY

ROAD RASH 64

THQ

MONTEZUMA'S

RETURN

TBA

WCW 99

EA SPORTS

HERCULES:

THE LEGENDARY

JOURNEYS

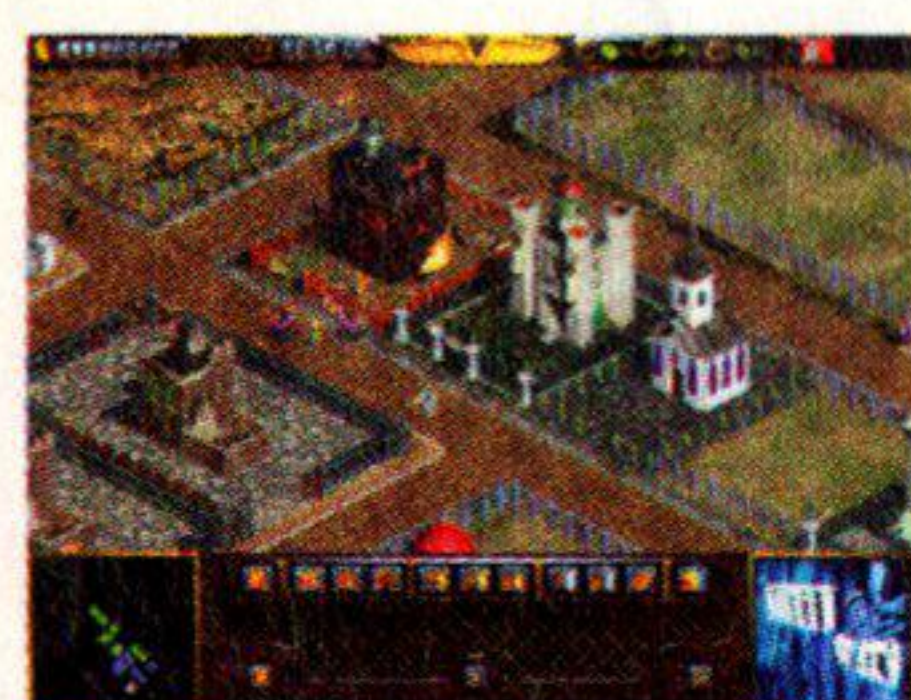
TITUS

DUCK DODGERS IN

THE 3RD 1/2

DEMENTIA

INFOGRAMES



MARRIED TO THE MOB

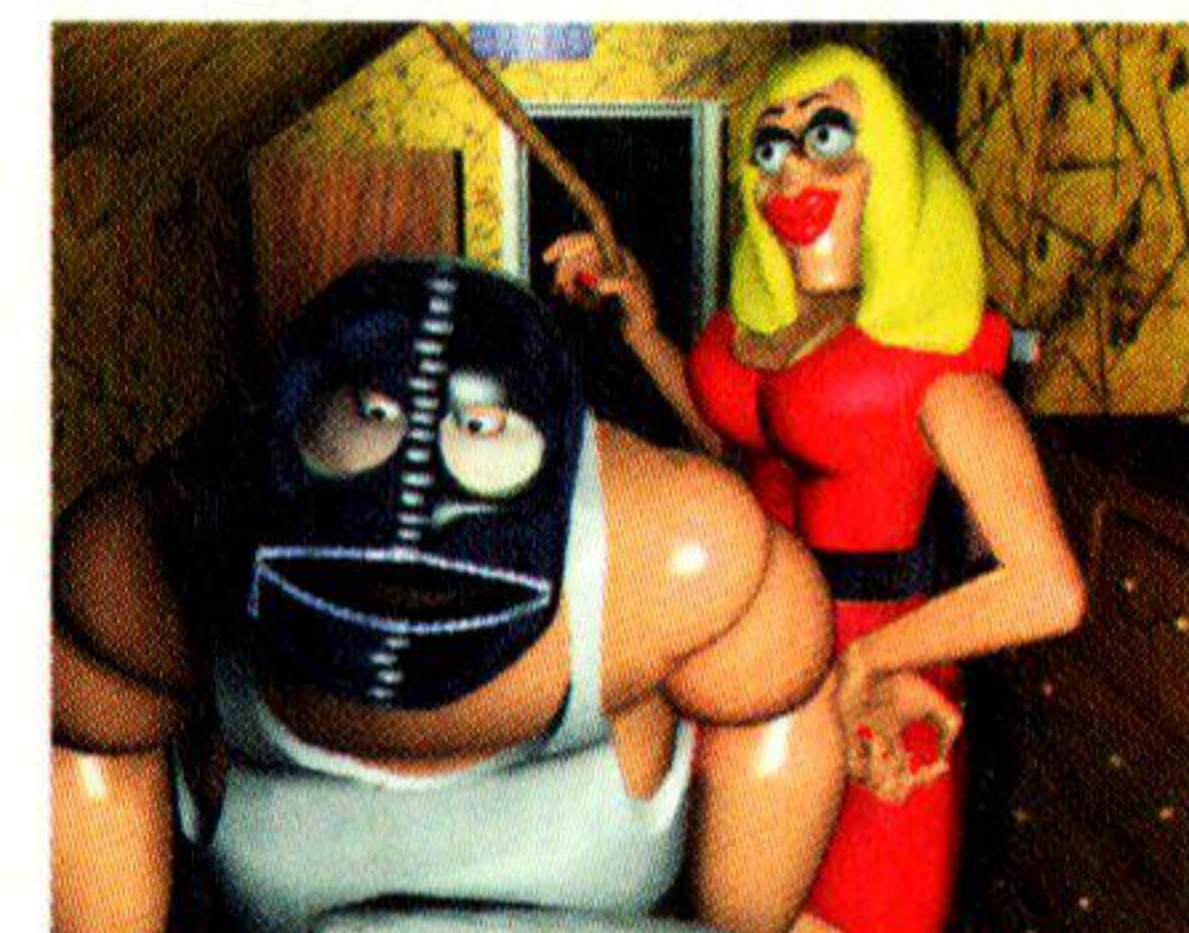
Build a gangster's paradise on your PC with Constructor '98

The original *Constructor* saw the player taking on the role of a slum landlord, dealing with hippies, punks and the Mafia as they attempted to build a real estate empire. The slightly late *Constructor '98* will essentially provide more of the same, combining elements from many recent strategy games such as *Sim City* and *Theme Park*. There have been a significant number of enhancements over the first game, with generally more detail all-around, an improved control system and intelligent cursors and much improved graphics that now allow the player to see more of the city, and at higher resolutions.

Players must build and occupy buildings in the city

that can be converted to houses, small businesses such as diners and breweries, and later expanded and upgraded to much higher class outfits such as nightclubs or grand hotels. As an ambitious young mobster you must bribe police to stay away from the illegal proceedings and fend off raids from enemy gangs, then create your own gangs comprising of workers, repairmen and violent thugs and send them off to wipe out your opposition. Later on in the game you'll be able to call upon the services of some people with more specialised trades: burglars to steal money or equipment; 'nutters' to smash up other buildings; hoodlums or hitmen – even hookers to distract nosy cops while you clean up a crime scene. With roughly 45

buildings to create, loads of different businesses to set up and command and plenty of different people and gadgets at your disposal, *Constructor '98* looks set to ride high in the PC charts following its release. Look out for a full review soon.



LARA BUGGED OUT

Tomb Raider III hit by a serious bug

Many of you may have realised this already, but there is bug in *Tomb Raider III* that will cause corruption of the map data. Standing on a certain tile in a certain room and saving the game will cause invisible walls to come up and prevent the player from completing the level.

Core have released a patch that will rectify the problem with the PC version of the game, but there is no such solution with the

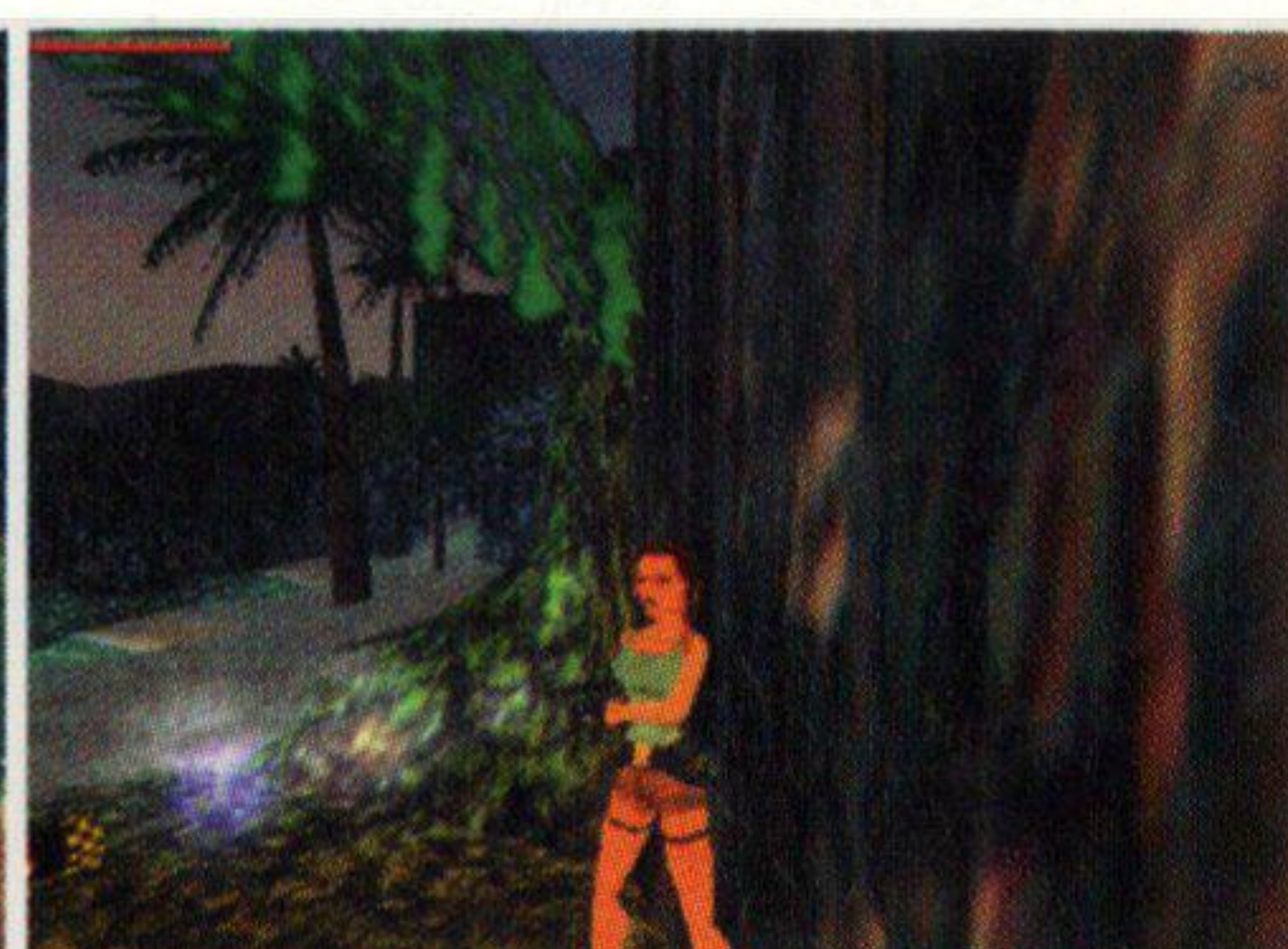
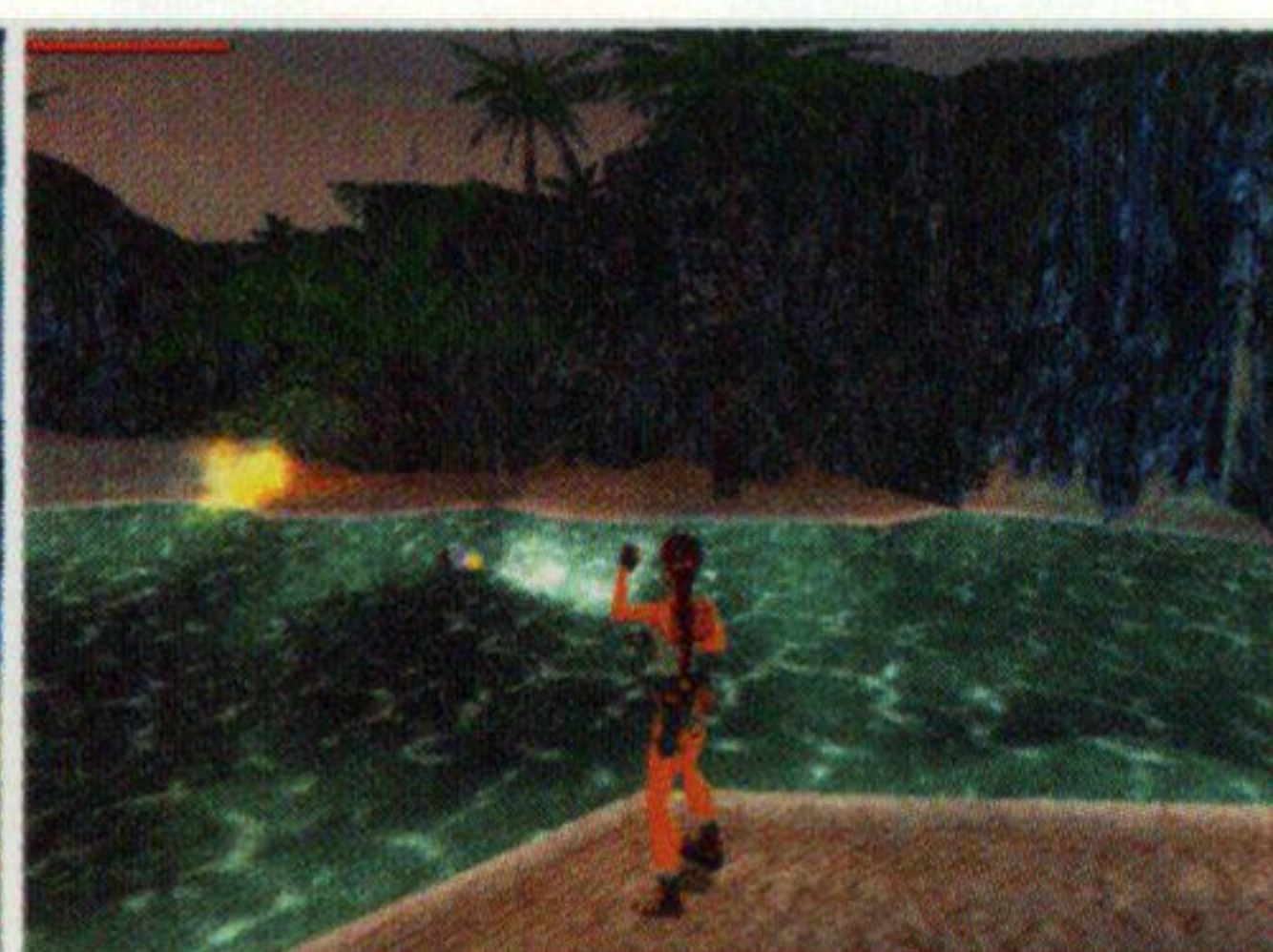
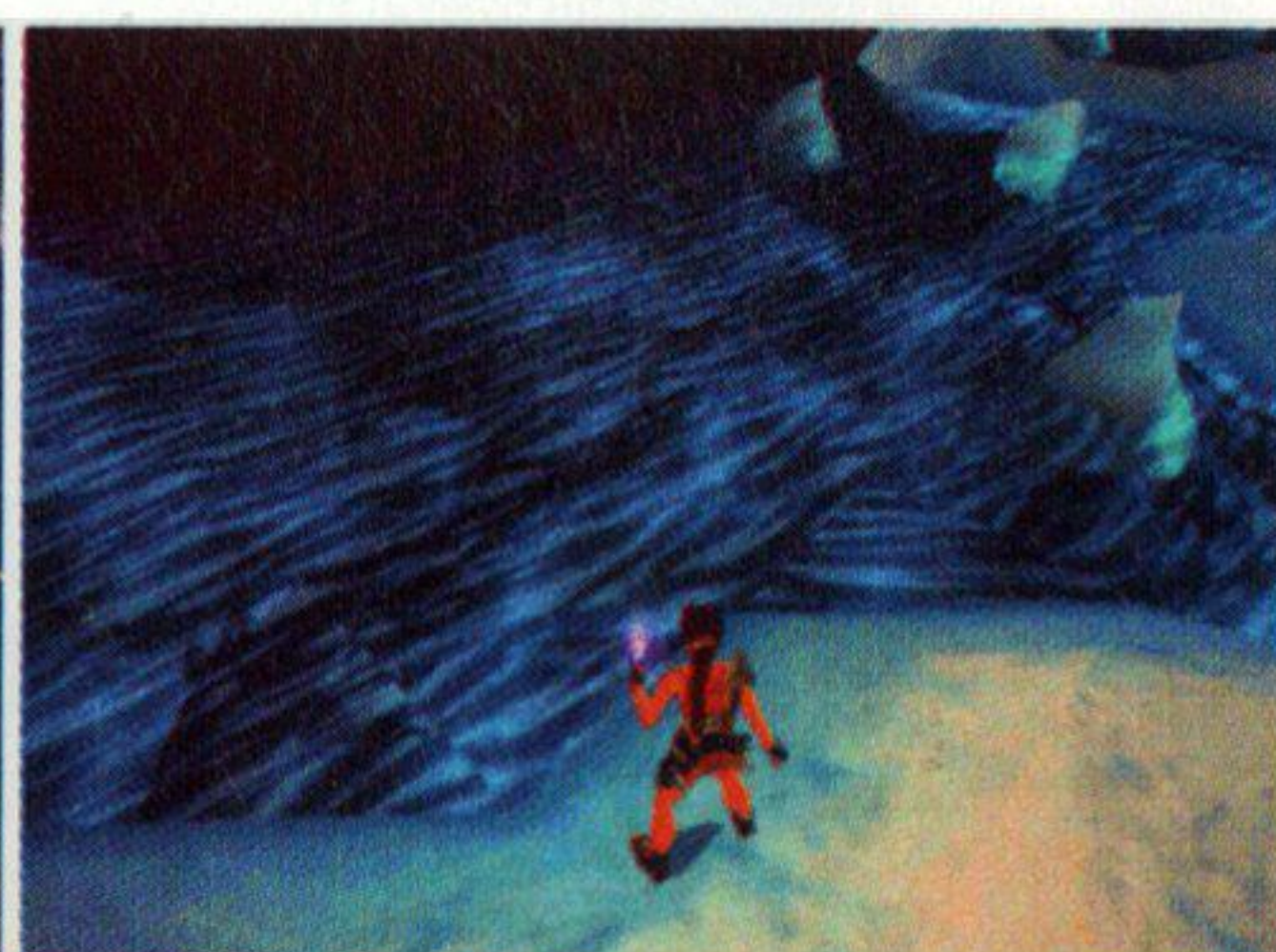
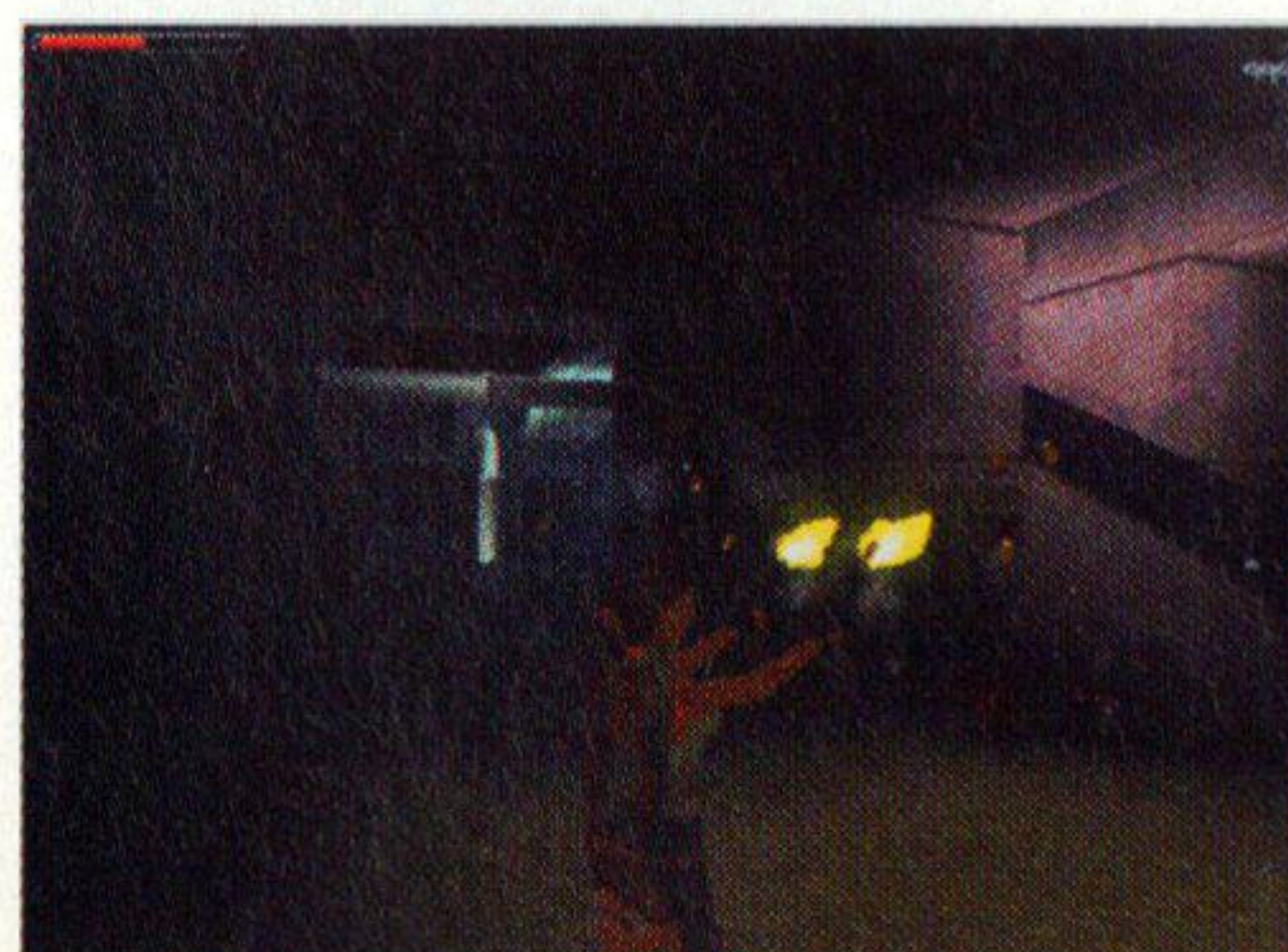
PlayStation release. Adrian Smith of Core had this to say about the bug: "Temple Ruins: If you save your game in the room with the statue (at the bottom of the slope) and then go back into that room later in the game (there is no reason to) then you won't be able to go through doors that have already been opened, thus you won't be able to complete the level." He continued: "The solution to this is to not save the game in this room and don't return to

it." The patch will also fix problems that PC owners may have had with the sound. Mike Schmitt of publishers, Eidos said "The patch we released has helped an awful lot of those experiencing sound problems with the PC version. We're looking into how we can avoid the problem with the AWE 64 card in the future. We used compression sound in the game instead of the true audio CD tracks that were used in the first two titles.

People were experiencing problems with that form of audio as well. We really believe that compressed sound is definitely the way to go." In answer to accusations that the *TR III* code was released before finished, Schmitt had this to say: "We don't think the code was rushed at all," stated Schmitt. "We did more testing on *Tomb Raider III* than the other two outings combined. *Tomb Raider III* had to go through Sony testing, and they didn't find it."

NINTENDO'S CHIEF SPEAKS!

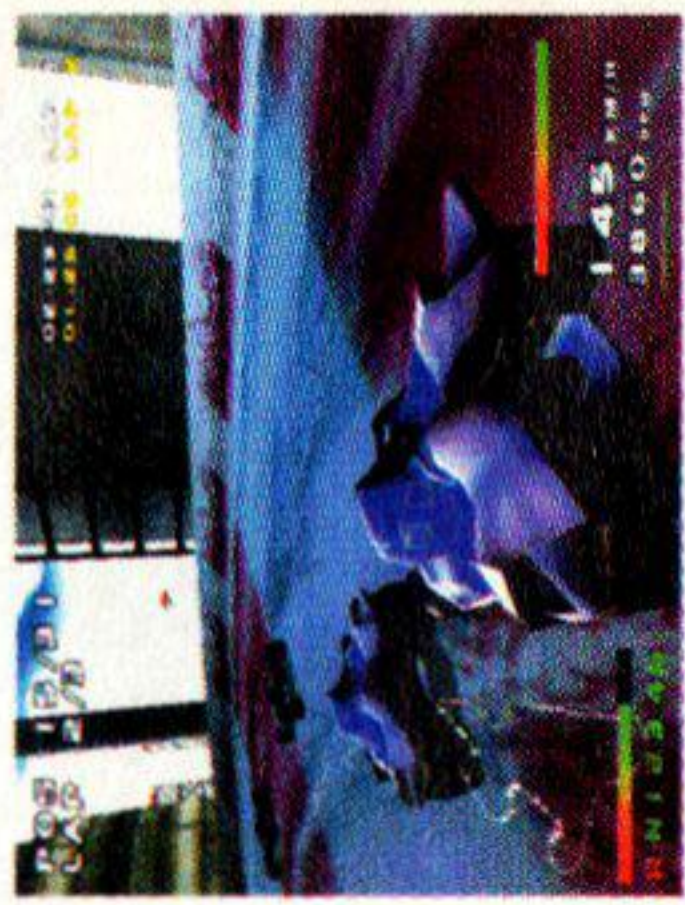
Nintendo's boss, Hiroshi Yamauchi, has spoken out about people in the industry who "don't understand". Explaining this he went onto say that "If you develop a new console with powerful CPU, what kind of games are you going to release? Do you think it will automatically be a success? Can you work with a software developing team well? The people who are always talking about the next console are the ones that don't understand the video game business." We can only guess that he is referring to the release of Sega's new Dreamcast console. Sour grapes, Yamauchi-sama?



OCTOBER

DETHKARZ

INFOGRAMES



MAGICAL TETRIS
CHALLENGE

CAPCOM

LEGO RACERS

LEGO MEDIA

BANJO-TOOIE

NINTENDO

WINTER
1999

COMMAND AND
CONQUER

ELECTRONIC ARTS

DONKEY KONG

COUNTRY 64

NINTENDO

LAST LEGION UX

HUDSON SOFT

STARCRAFT

NINTENDO

PAPERBOY 64

GT INTERACTIVE

F-18 SUPER

HORNET

TITUS

NUCLEAR STRIKE

THQ

DAIKATANA

EIDOS

PERFECT DARK

RARE



GAUNTLET

LEGENDS

GT INTERACTIVE

UPDATE: TWELVE TALES: CONKER 64

After making his debut in *Diddy Kong Racing*, it seems that the Rare/Nintendo partnership has managed to create yet another pixelated celebrity – or at least they will do very shortly, following the release of their latest venture, *Twelve Tales: Conker 64*. Previously known as *Conker's Quest*, the game does at first glance look to be yet another (groan) cute N64 3D platformer, but then, as Rare showed with *Banjo-Kazooie*, that's not necessarily such a bad thing.

A lot of the emphasis has been put on creating a kind of interactive cartoon. The settings for each level all share this similarity, taking place in areas such as

woodland, sea front, Wild West and ancient Greek arenas. The graphical side is certainly very good, with fluent animation and lush colourful landscapes.

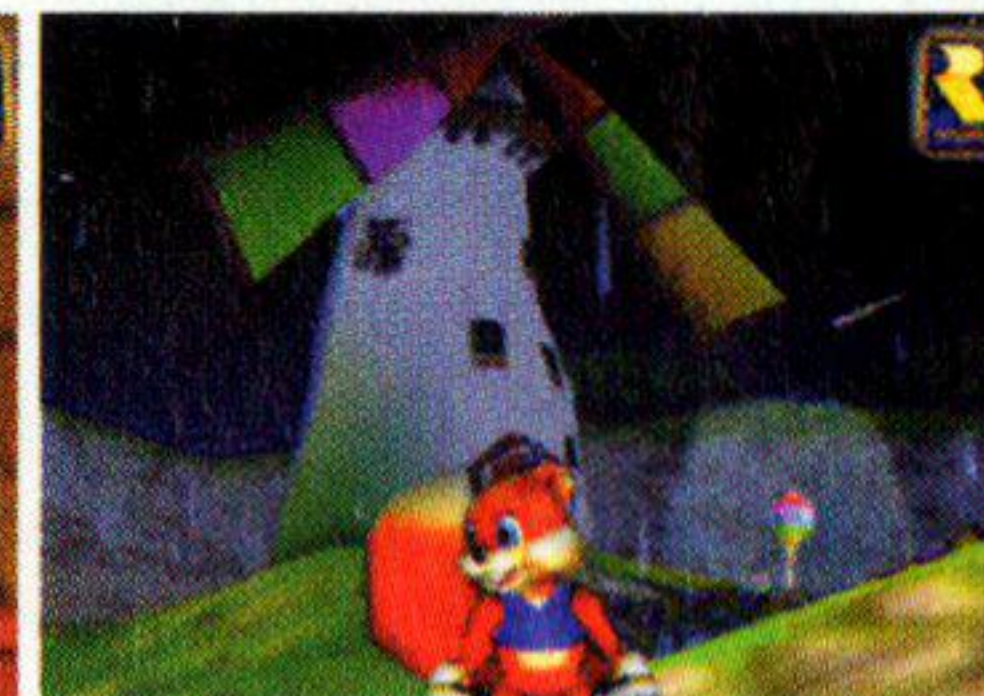
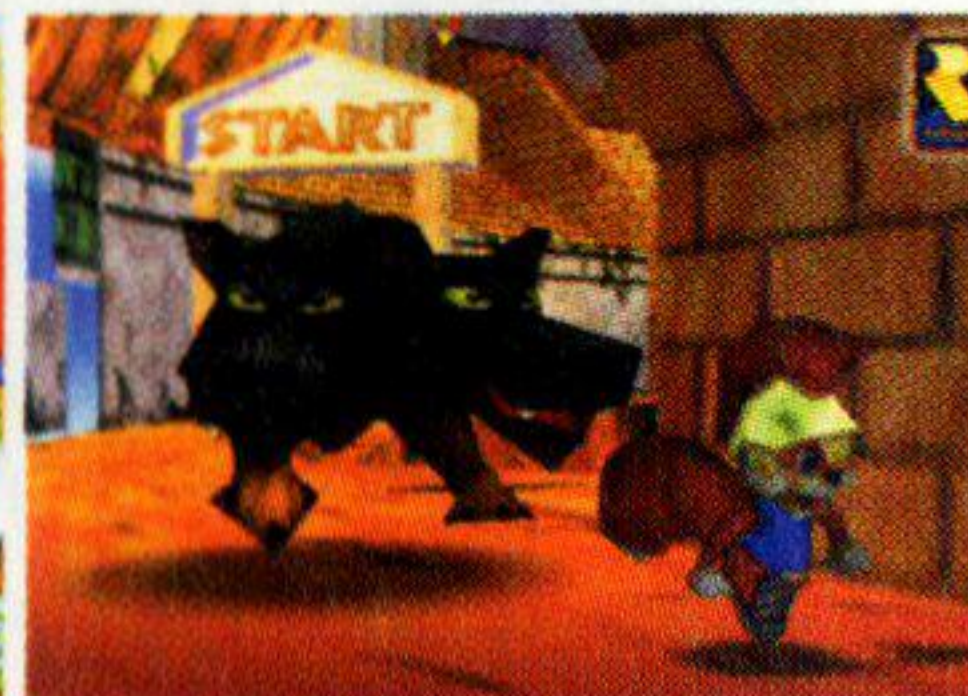
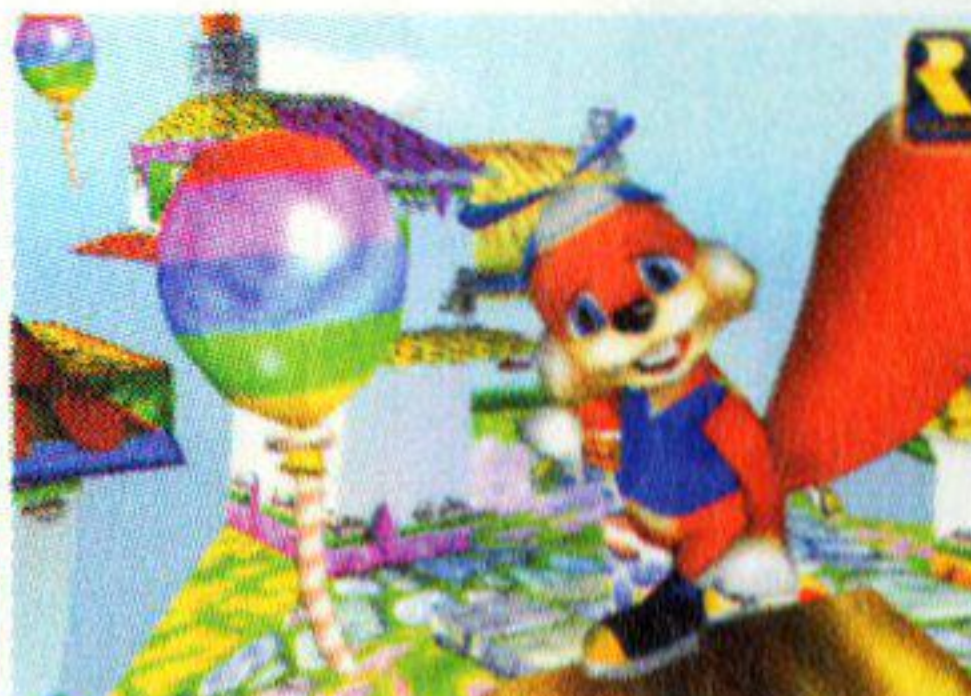
The one player games vary significantly depending on who you choose to play as: Conker brings a typical arcade-style game with a wide range of direct attacks on offer, while his female friend, Berri the chipmunk, will take on a more strategy-led role and defeats enemies indirectly with the help of another computer controlled character.

As a bit of a first for games of this sort, a simultaneous two player co-operative mode where players take control of both Conker and his owl companion has been

included. It's not yet known how this will work, but there's certainly a fair bit of potential there. There is also a four player split-screen deathmatch set-up, which will no doubt prove interesting.

The most interesting feature is the inclusion of the various moods that your character can be in. They all have a range of emotions and react differently according to their surroundings and its associated dangers. Using this the player can manipulate the tone of the game, effectively changing its whole style in any way they like.

You can expect a full Beta look on *Twelve Tales: Conker 64* next month.



TC RECOMMENDS

N64

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

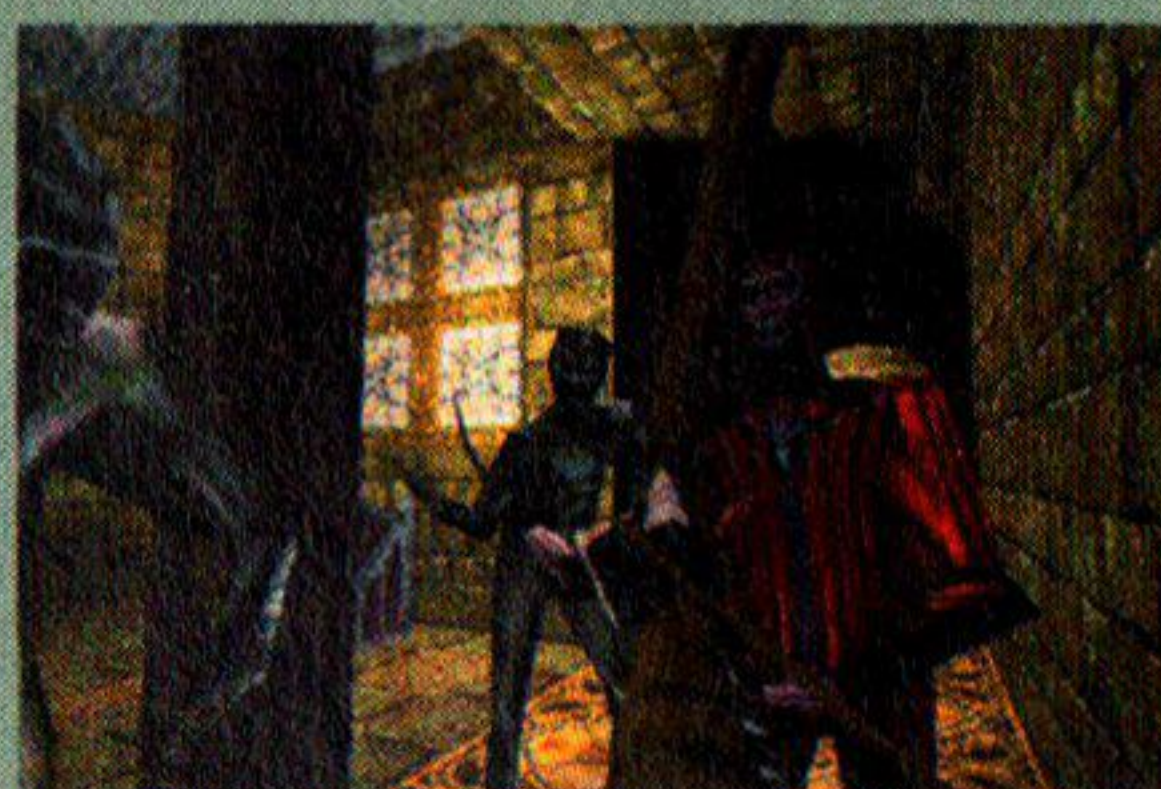
In a year when N64 software has been of a high standard, *Zelda 64* was head and shoulders over the rest. That Miyamoto genius is in effect again.



PC

Thief: The Dark Project

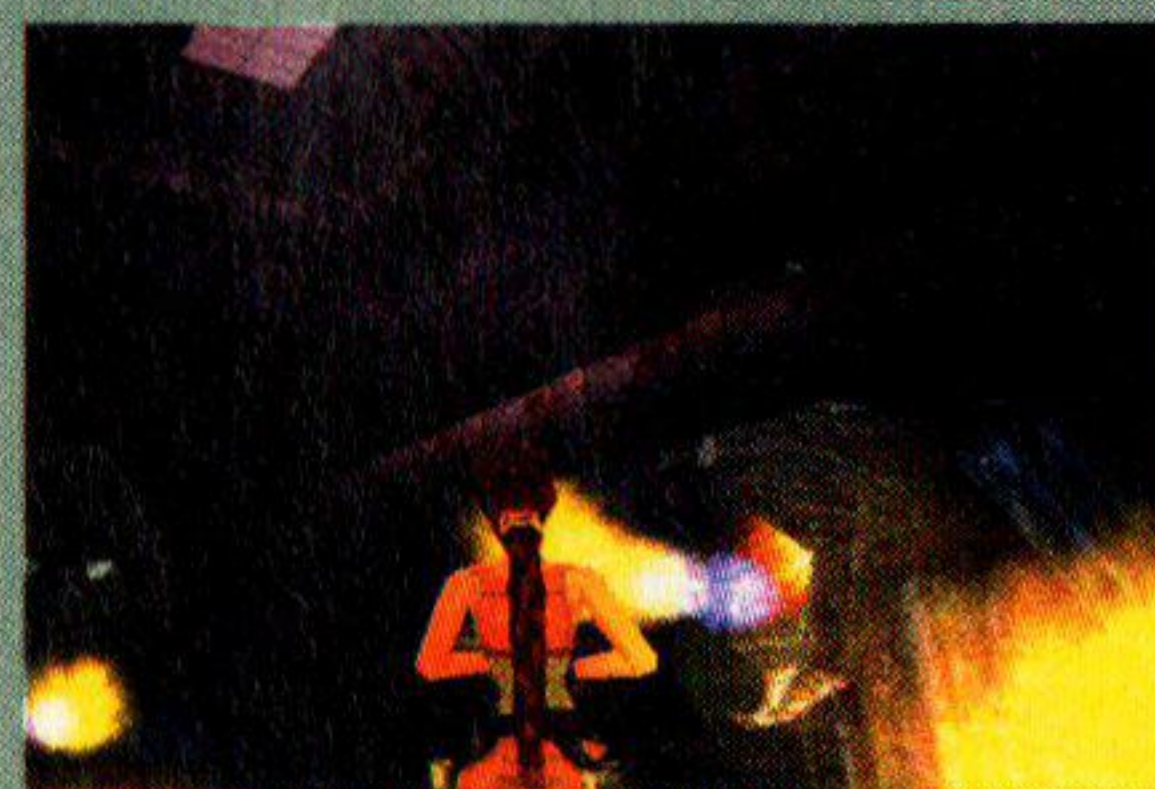
Eidos' first-person adventure is a wonderful mix of action and stealth and makes a refreshing change from all the blasting in this genre.



PLAYSTATION

Tomb Raider III

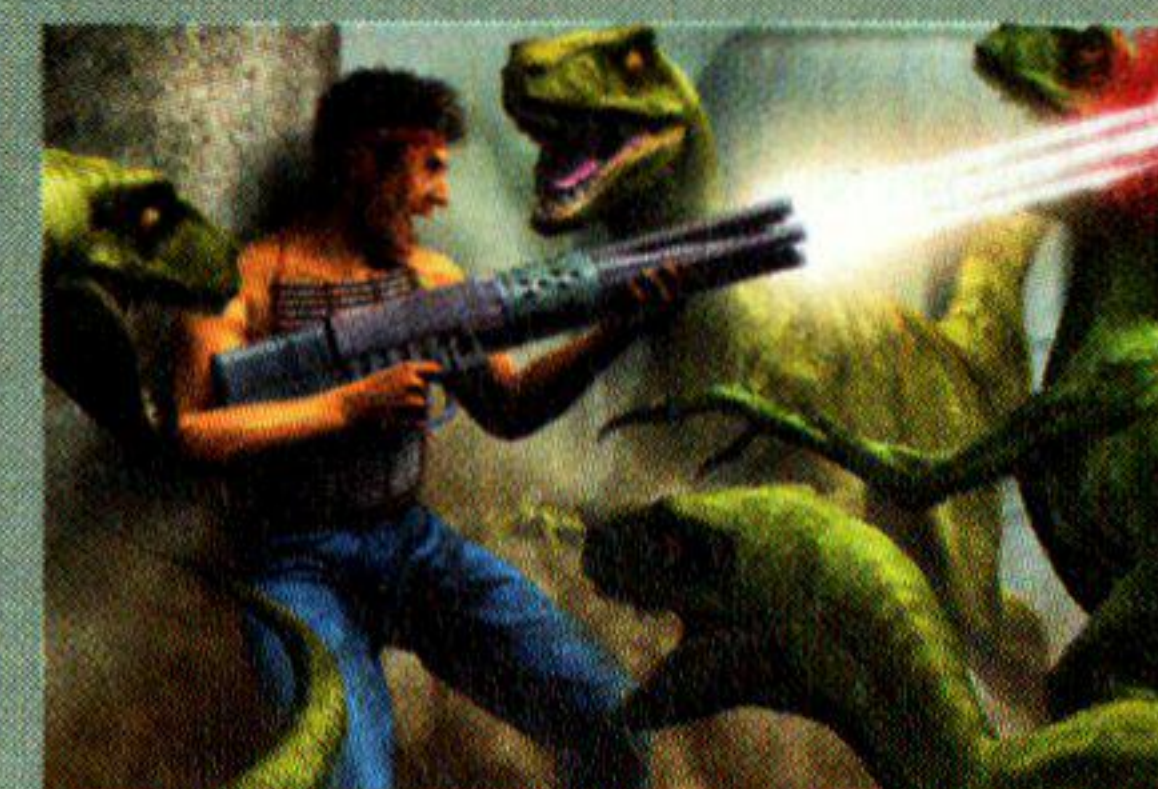
If your not bored with Lara by now – and sales figures prove that you're not – then you could do a lot worse than her third adventure. More of the same – but is that a bad thing?



GAMEBOY

Turok 2

A perfect conversion from the excellent N64 title was always going to be out of the question, but a translation to a platformer works surprisingly well.



DREAMCAST

Virtua Fighter 3tb

Not quite as deep as Namco's *Tekken 3*, but it's almost there. Plenty of moves, instinctive gameplay and some wonderful visuals. A great launch title for the Dreamcast.



TC MOST WANTED

N64

Mario Smash Bros.

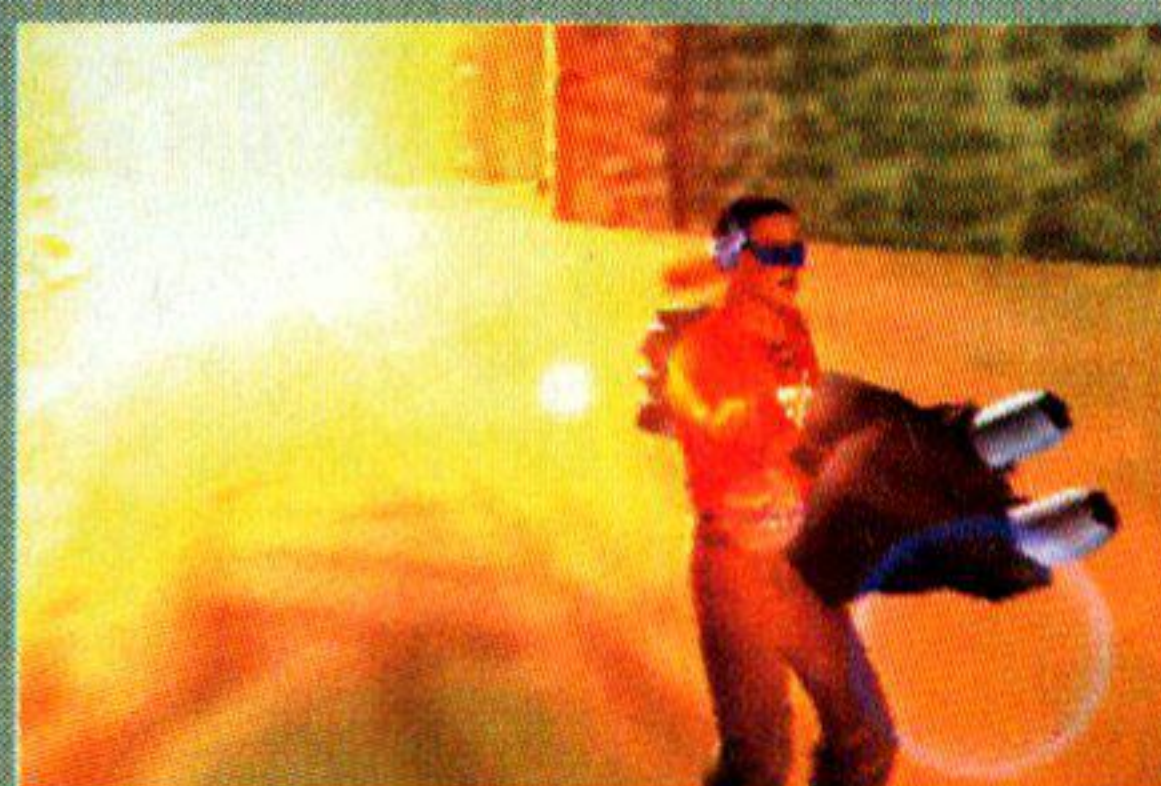
Nintendo's first beat-'em-up that features all of their major star characters. Won't be a serious fighting game at all but is bound to be loads of fun.



PC

Outcast

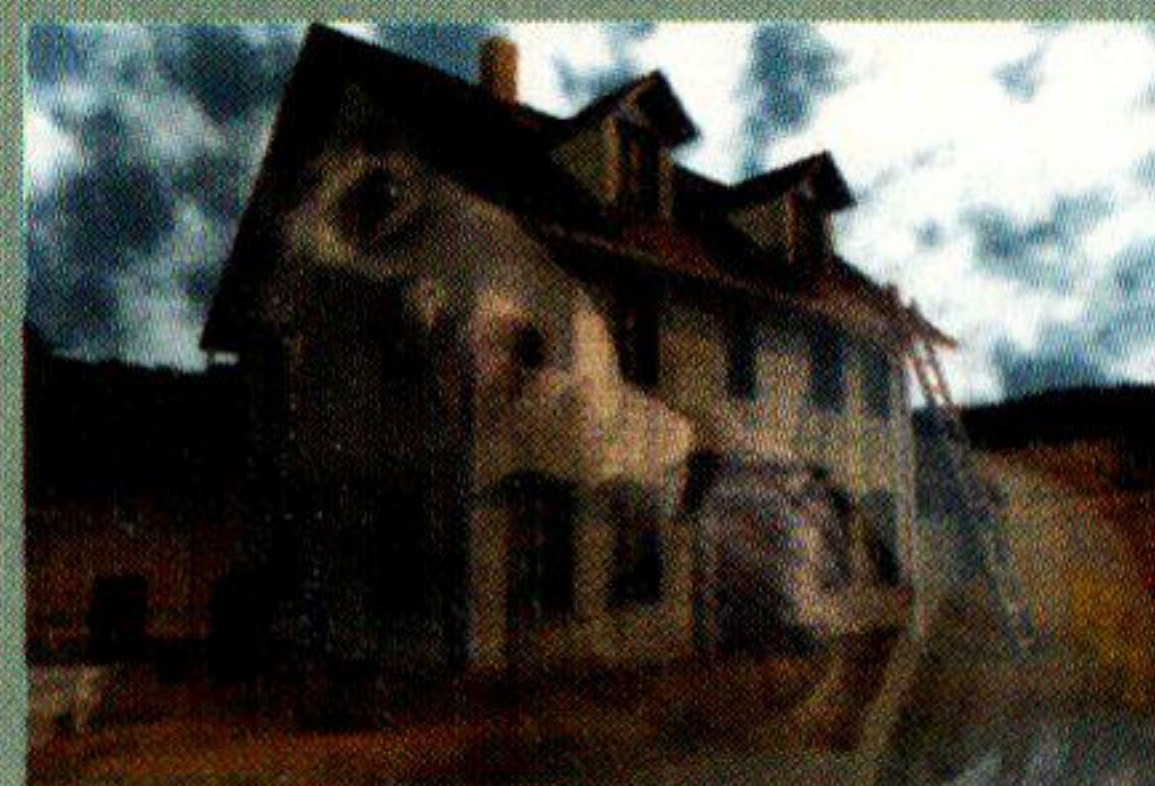
Has incredible graphics and gameplay which is superb mix between action and puzzle solving. Should be one of the best PC titles of this year.



PLAYSTATION

Silent Hill

More survival horror-type action on the PlayStation, this time courtesy of Konami. Should be the most frightening game ever and features some stunning FMV.



GAMEBOY

Legend of Zelda DX

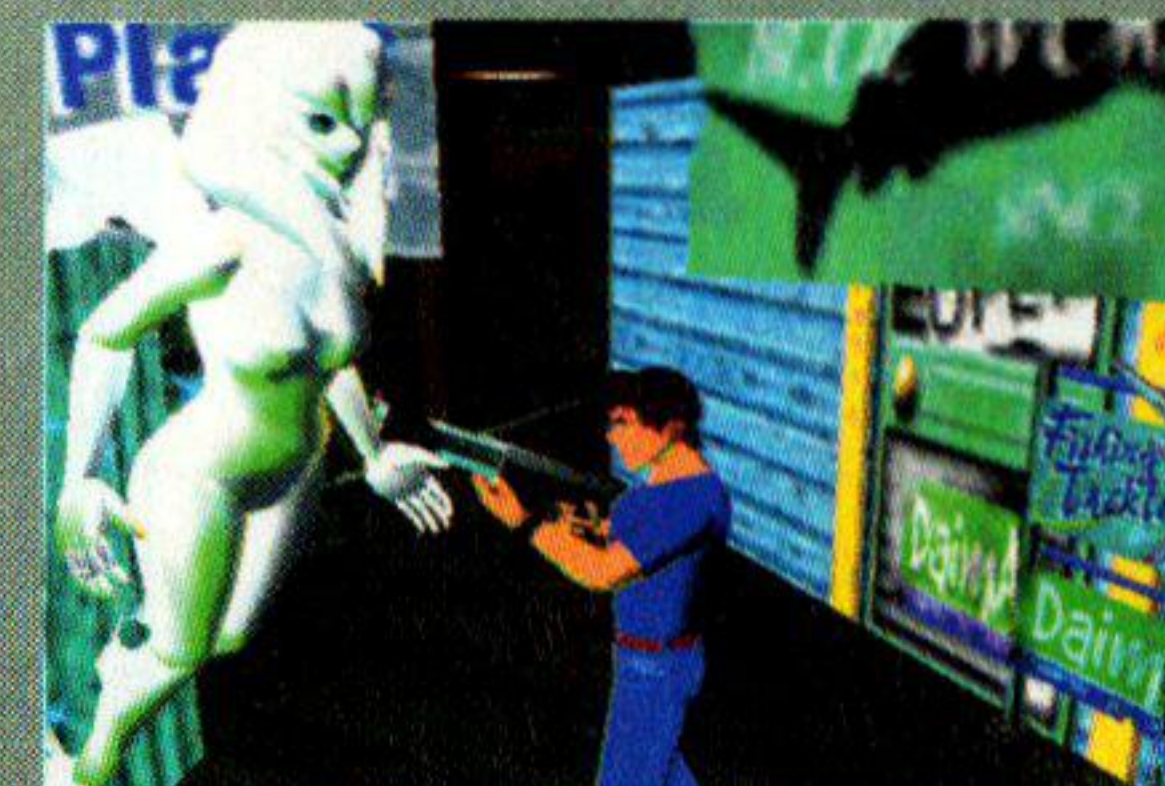
Should be out by the time you read this, and is looking like it might be the best game ever to appear on the Game Boy. As good, if not better, than the SNES *Zelda*.



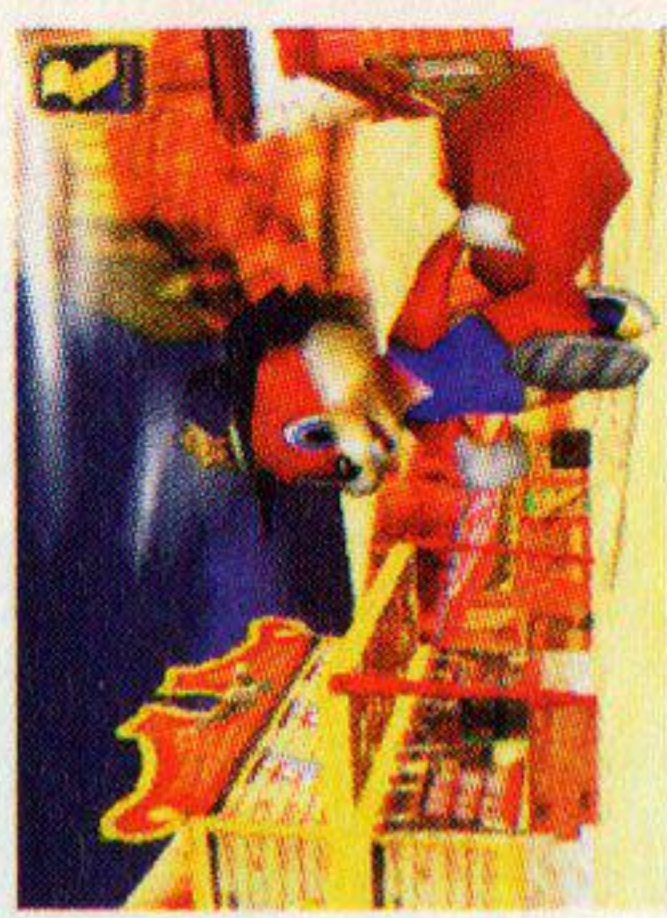
DREAMCAST

Blue Stinger

Potentially, this game could be even better than *Resident Evil*. Apart from the real-time graphics, the game features an expansive environment that allows the player to explore anywhere.



TWELVE TALES:
CONKER 64
RARE



STAR WARS:
**THE PHANTOM
MENACE**

NINTENDO

ROLLERBALL

MGM INTERACTIVE

SPACE INVADERS

ACTIVISION

PITFALL

ACTIVISION

EXTREME SPORTS 64

EIDOS

SPOOKY

TBA

DESTRUCTION

DERBY 64

PSYGNOSIS

EARTHBOUND 64

(MOTHER 3)

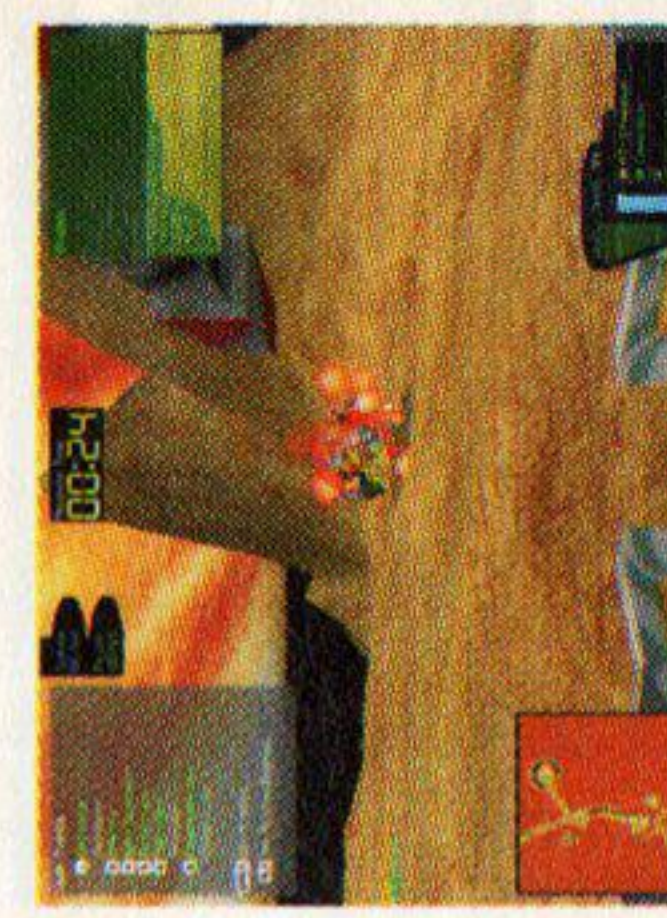
NINTENDO

ASTEROIDS 64

CRAVE/ACTIVISION

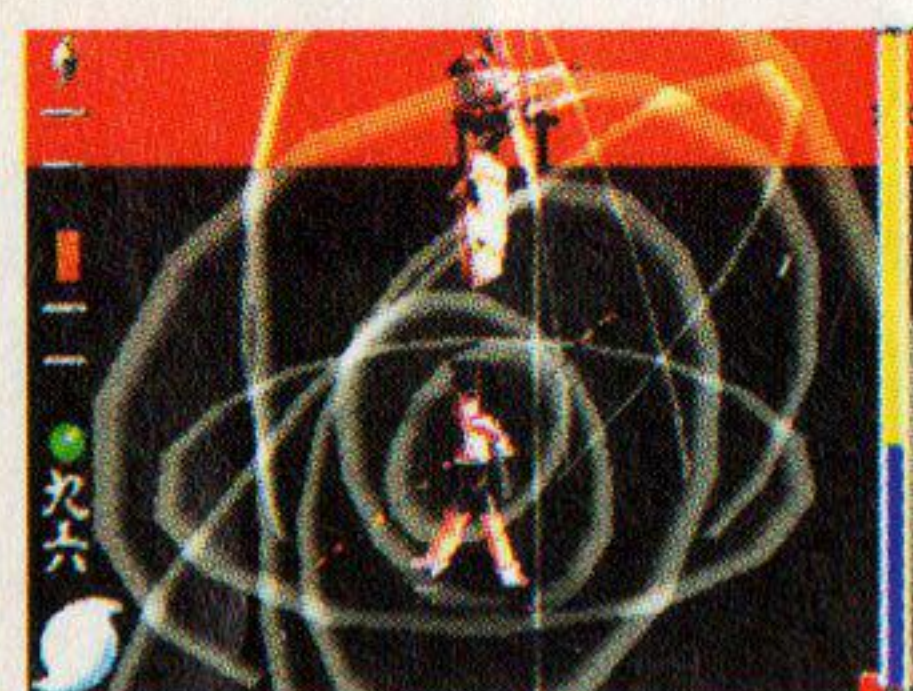
BATTLEZONE 64

CRAVE/ACTIVISION



DEZAEON 3D

ATHENA



CYBERBORG

Square announce new third-person adventure

Squaresoft, always ones to branch off into new genres, are developing a new third-person adventure game for the PlayStation. The game is entitled *Cyberborg* and is set in the 22nd Century. It sees you taking control of a crack commando unit on a mission to rescue an important alien ambassador.

You will get to change between each of the members of your party in order to complete each mission. These are divided up into areas or, as Square put it, Action Maps. These apparently contain many dungeons.

Playable characters include T.J. (leader of the party), Gigante (a large,

powerful man) and Fossis (quick, but poorly armoured).

Cyberborg is set for a spring release in Japan, and as yet Square have not yet announced if the game will make it to the US and Europe.



CAPTION COMPETITION

This is a new regular feature for the Reportage section of *Total CONTROL*. In an attempt to add a bit of humour to the magazine, we are challenging you to a caption writing competition. All you have to do is take a screenshot of a game and write a humorous/stupid/ironic/surreal caption for it. Obviously, it will help if the picture is funny in the first place... The winner each month will receive a year's subscription to *Total CONTROL* and the glory of having your name printed in the mag. For those of you without screenshots capabilities (i.e. a PC), then we'll provide you with a screenshot each month for you to put your immense caption writing talent to.

Send your captions via e-mail (for your own screenshots) or on the back of a postcard to:

Caption Competition
Total CONTROL
1 Roman Court
48 New North Road
Exeter
Devon EX4 4EP



The closing date for this month's printed screenshot is 22 February 1999, although any 'home-made' images will be considered whenever. Hey, we may even make a feature about it one day...

PORT OVER THE RAINBOW

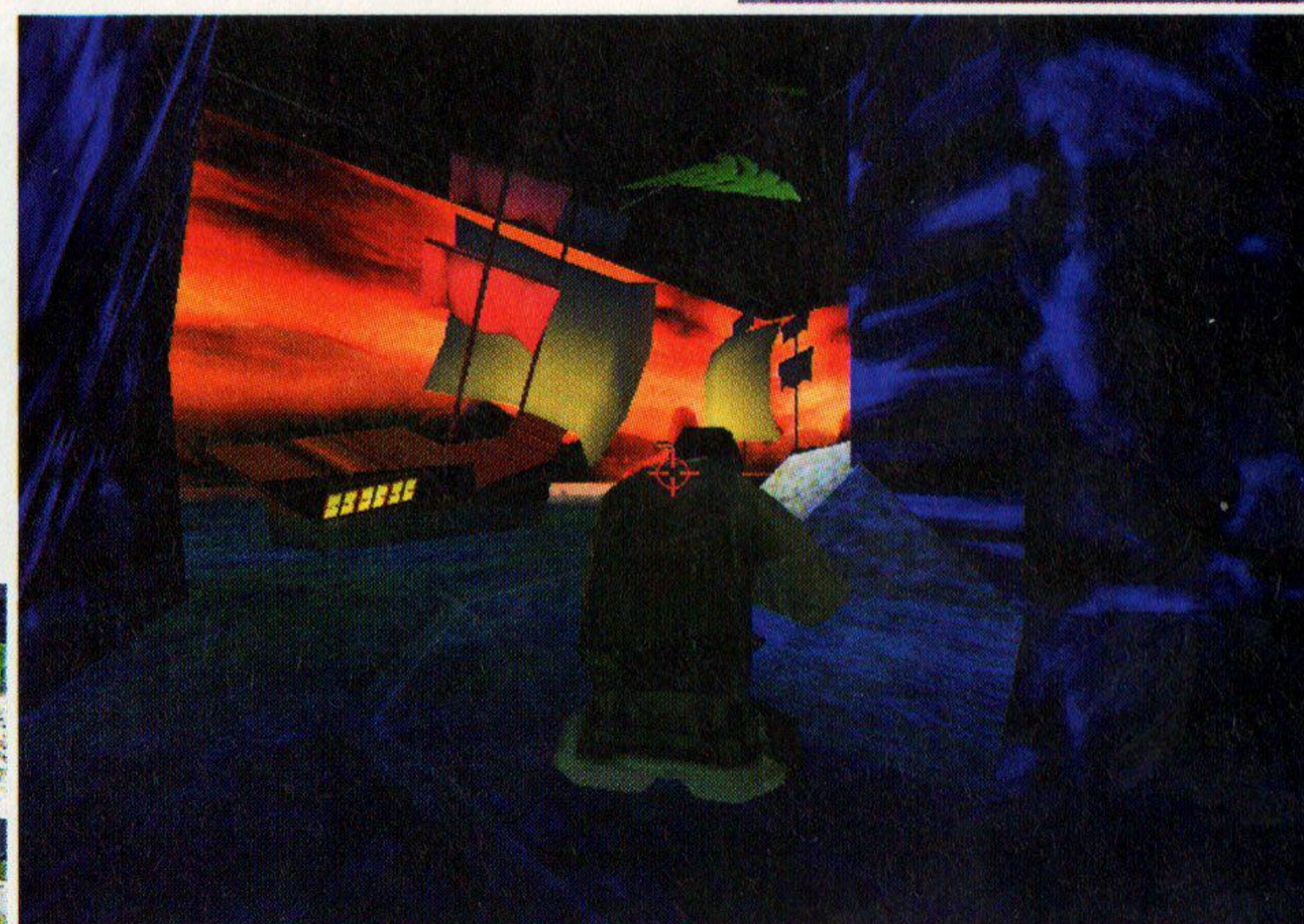
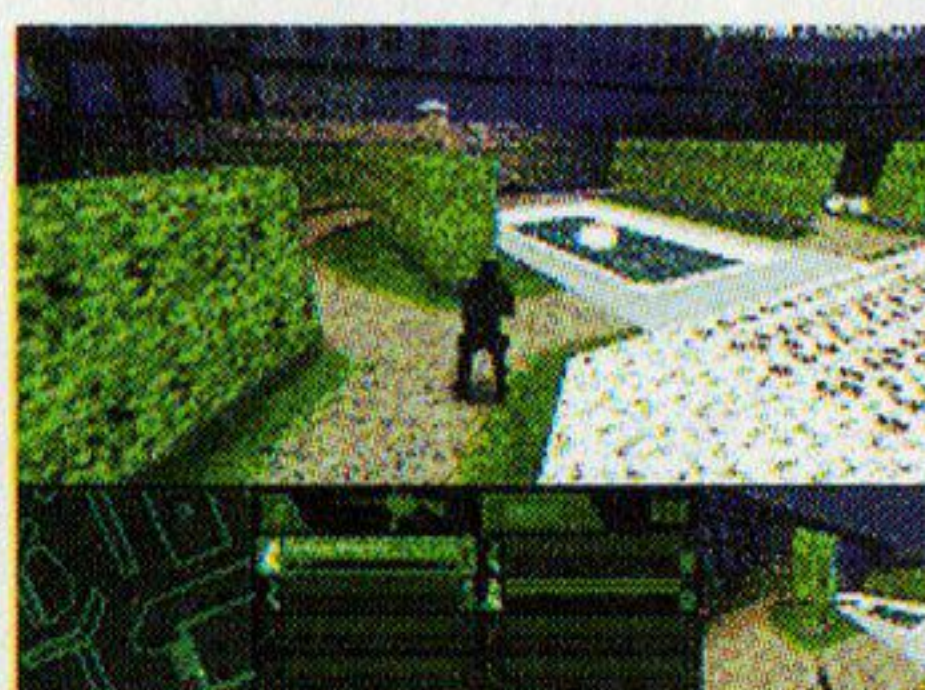
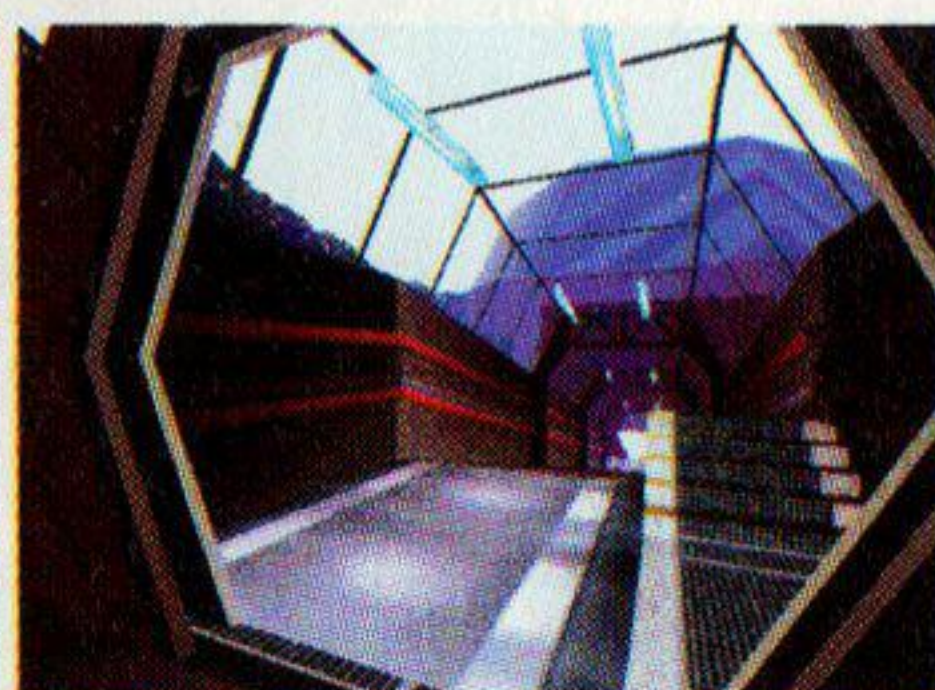
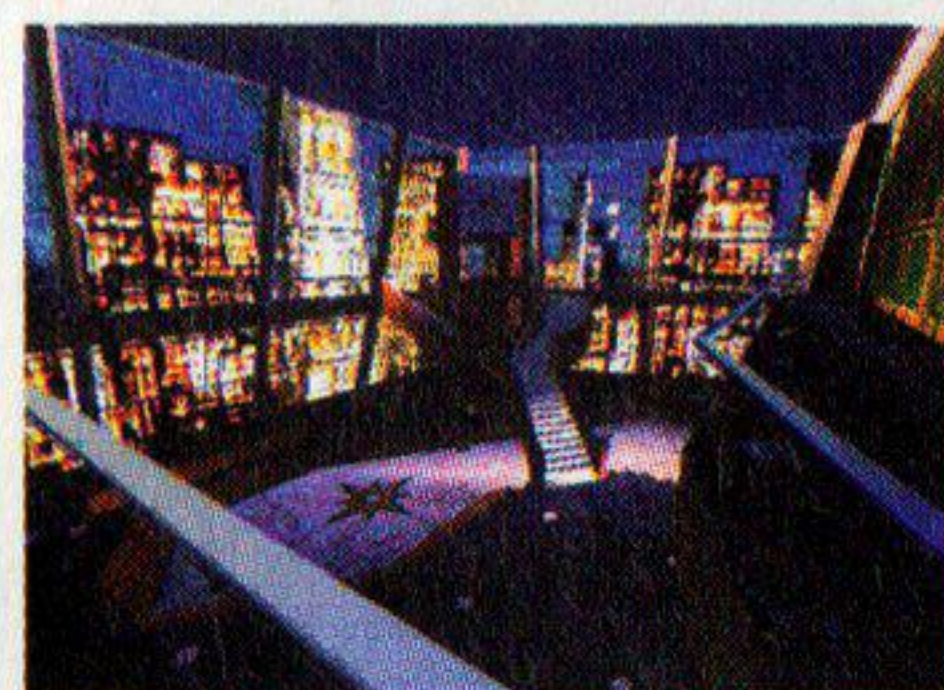
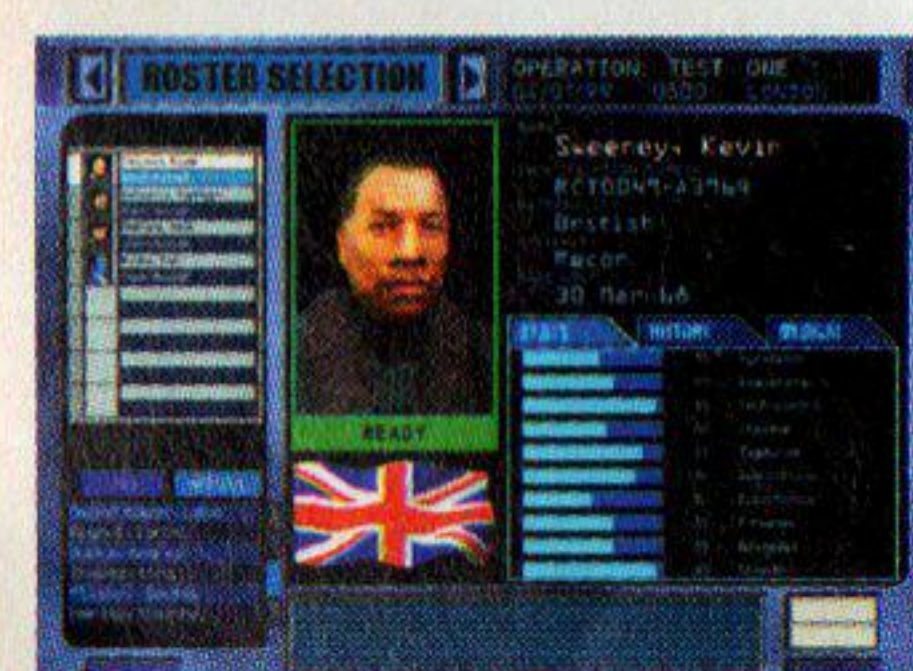
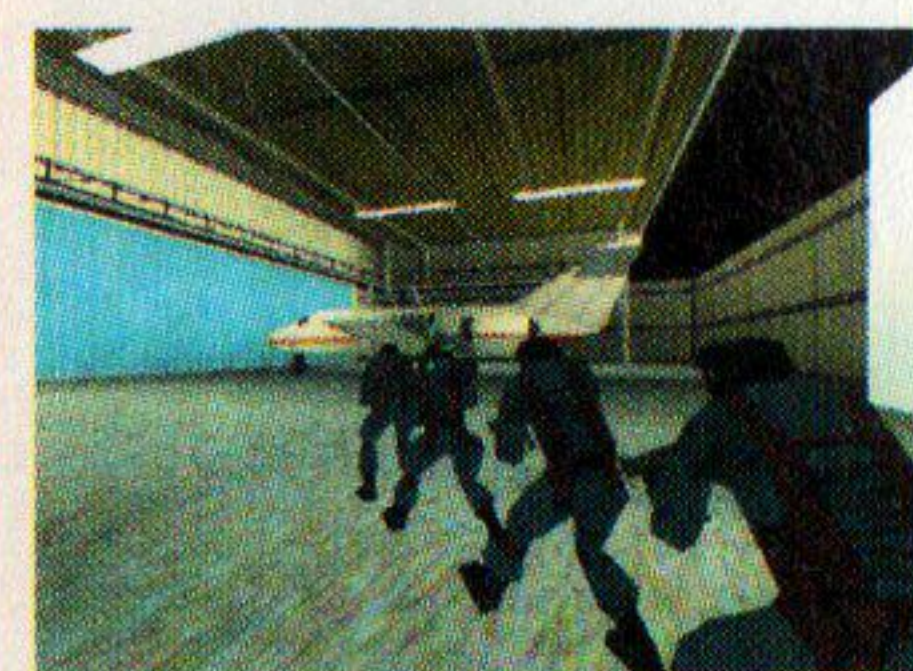
Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six* makes N64 conversion

Rainbow Six, the highly acclaimed first-person shoot-'em-up that appeared on the PC a few months back (TC Issue 1: 80%), will be making a conversion over to the N64 during '99. Taking on a far more realistic standpoint than many of the other games in the genre, players had to build and deploy various hit squads from an elite SWAT team known as Rainbow Six. Missions took place in realistic settings and required you to storm various buildings to achieve objectives ranging

from assassination of key political figures to placing bugs on the phones of suspected terrorists. A lot of emphasis was placed on team development and stealth; getting shot only once would effectively remove the team member from the game, wasting all of his experience that had been built up previously, though the game would still continue, with the player assuming control over the next member in his team.

A PlayStation conversion has already been confirmed and

should arrive during the summer of '99, though the extra power of the N64 may lead to the inclusion of four player VS and co-operative modes. This would make it more than worth the extra six months wait added on to its scheduled release during winter '99.



TBA

SUPER MARIO 64 II

NINTENDO

SIM CITY 64

NINTENDO

CONTRA SPIRITS 64

KONAMI

SUPER MARIO RPG 2

NINTENDO

REV LIMIT

SETA

OGRE BATTLE 3

NINTENDO

MEGAMAN 64

CAPCOM

EMPEROR OF THE

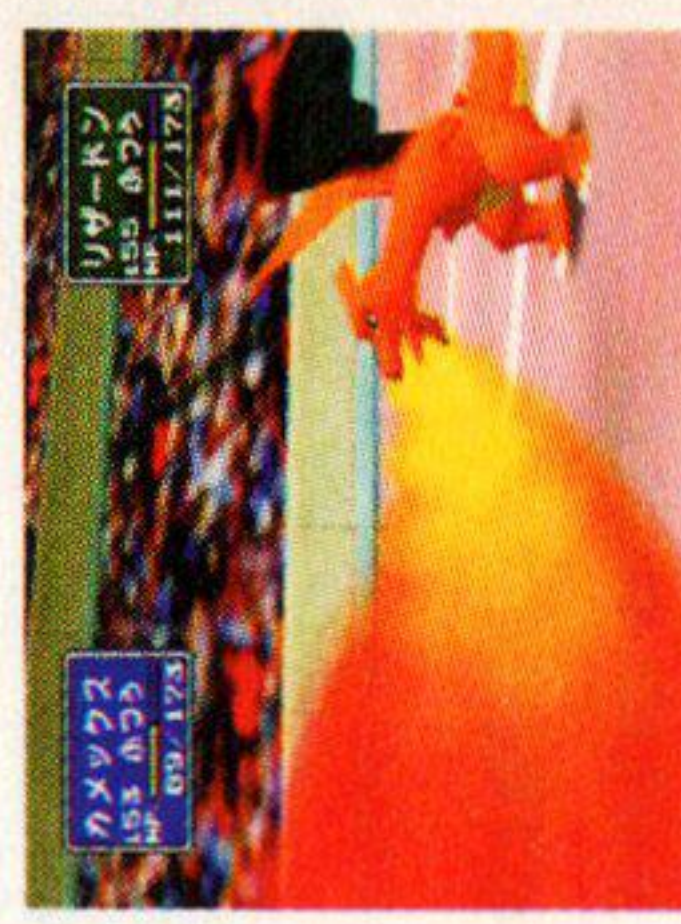
JUNGLE

NINTENDO

POKEMON

STADIUM

NINTENDO



GHOULS AND

GHOSTS

CAPCOM

TETRIS

NINTENDO

MISSION:

IMPOSSIBLE 2

INFOGRAMES

7TH LEGION

GT INTERACTIVE

MINI RACERS

NINTENDO

TOEJAM & EARL

GT INTERACTIVE

PIKACHU GENKI

DECHU

NINTENDO

POKEMON SNAP

NINTENDO (JAPAN

ONLY)

RAKUGA KIDS

KONAMI

UPDATE: GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

Set in a fantasy environment, *Giants: Citizen Kabuto* puts the player in the middle of a three-way war. The fantasy world centres around a group of barren planet fragments surrounding an island, rich with resources and ideal for population.

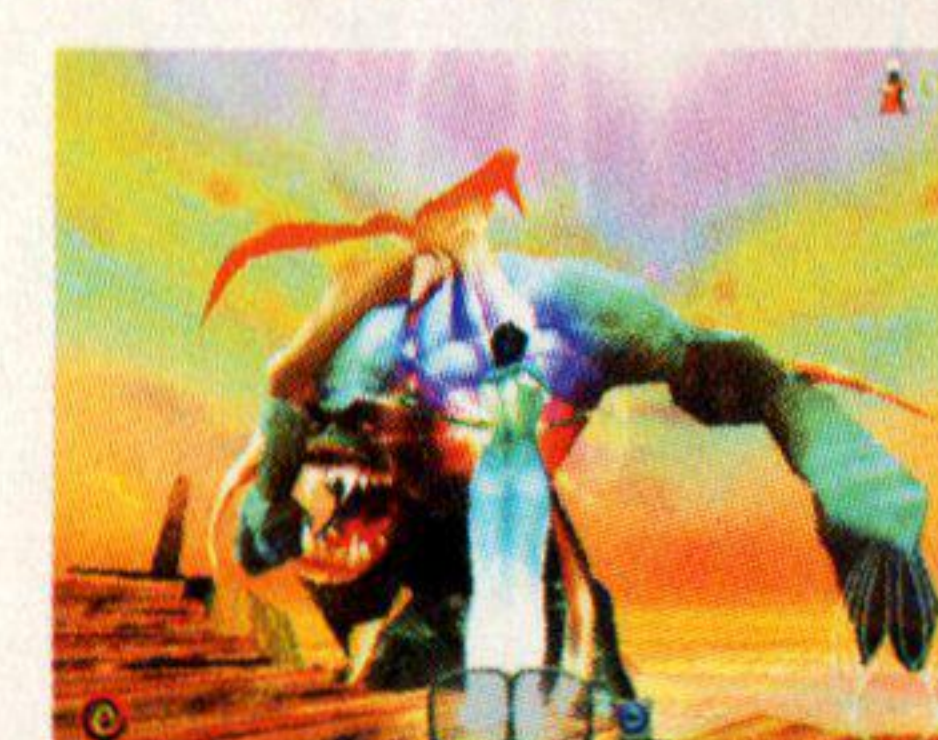
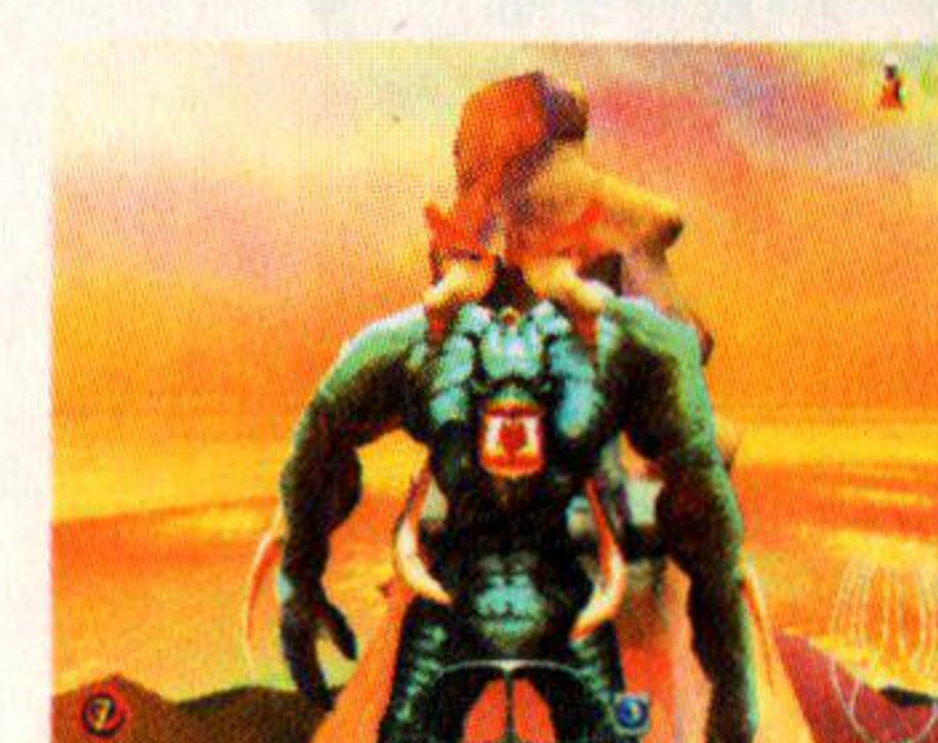
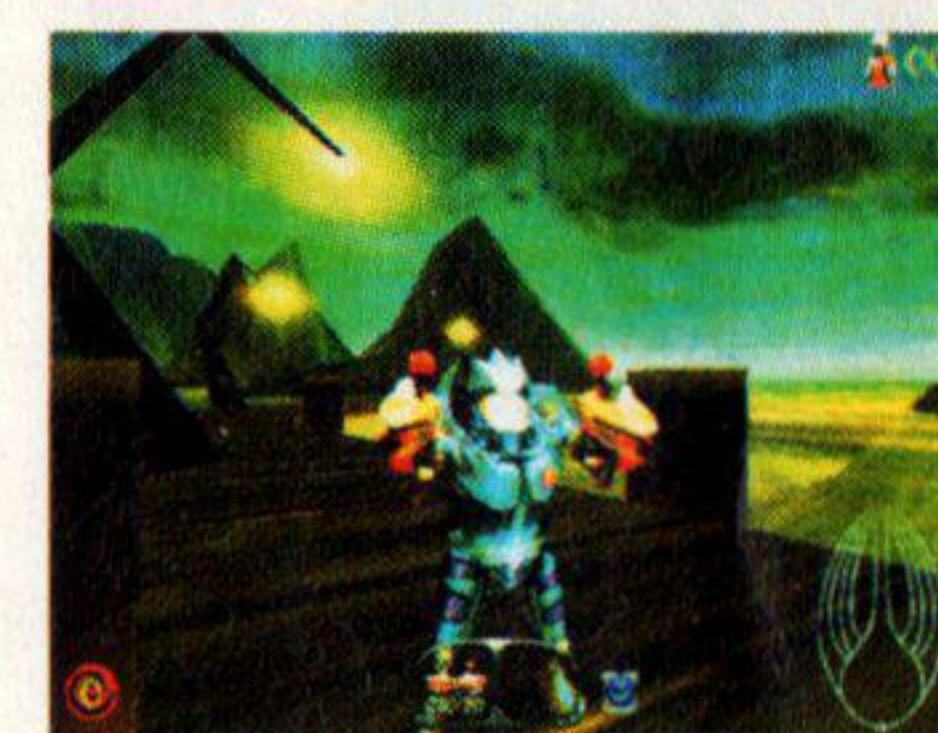
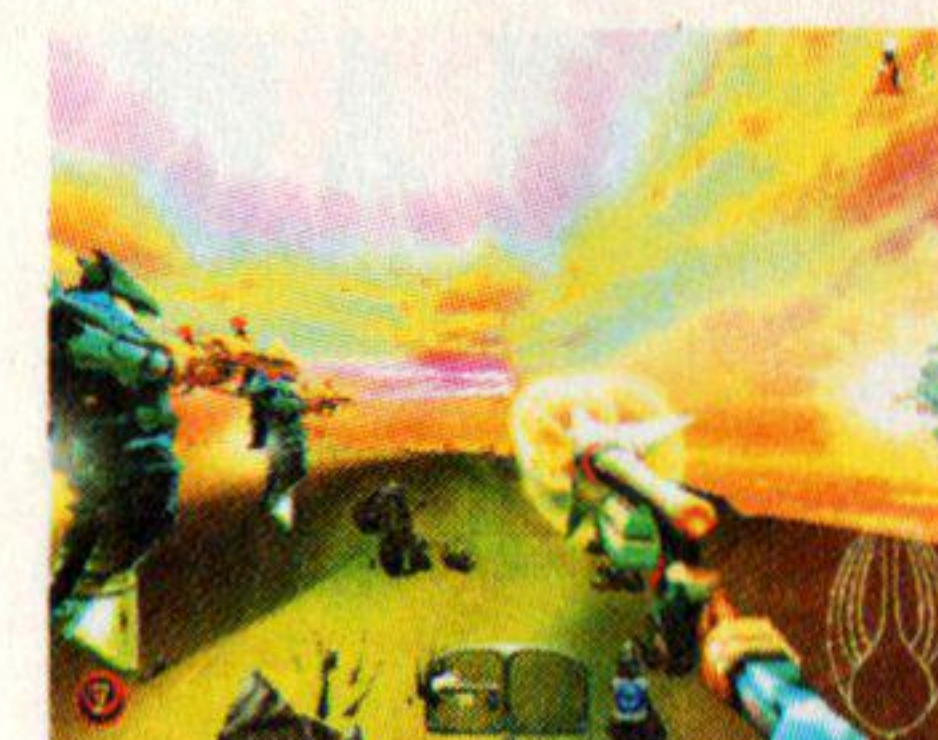
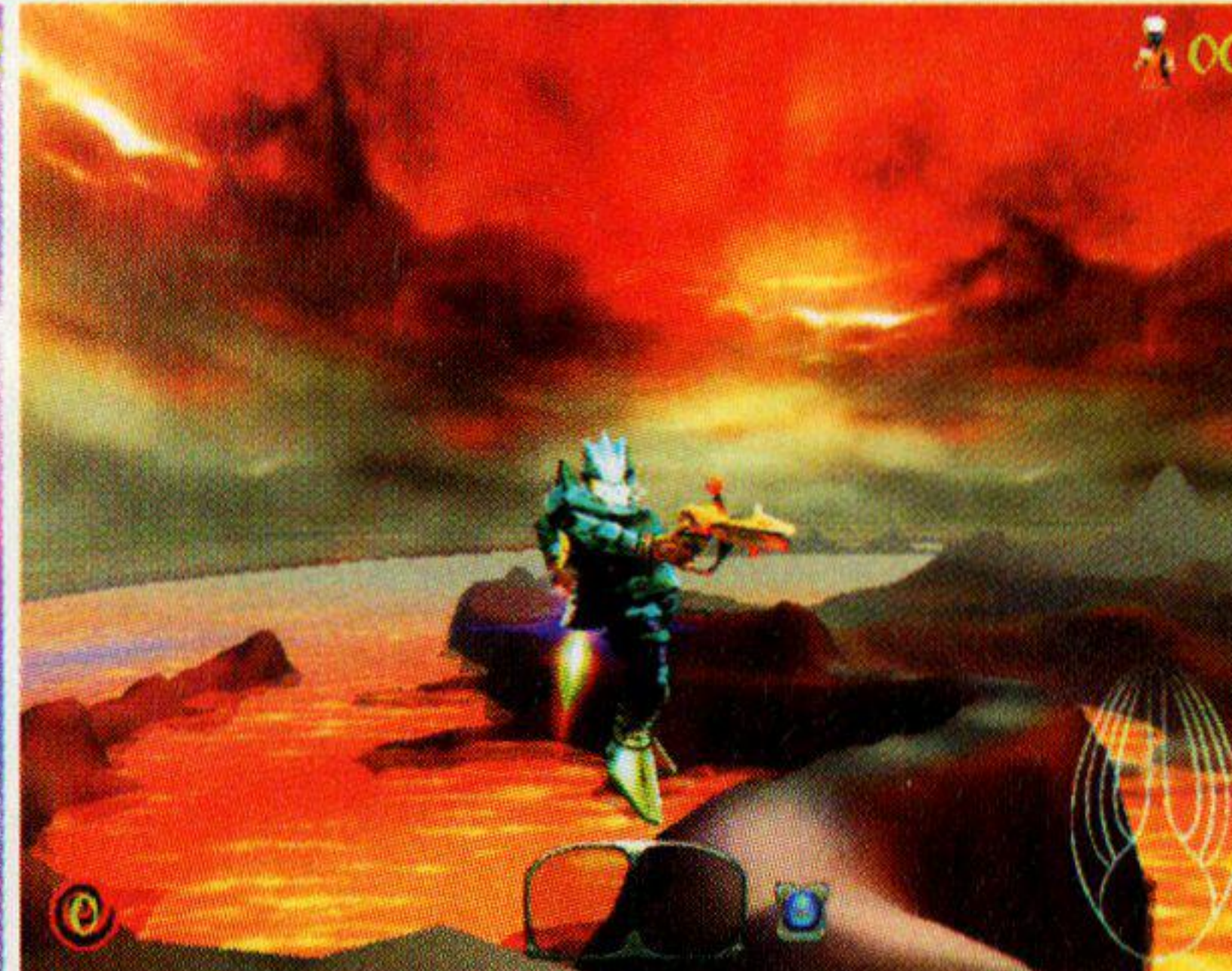
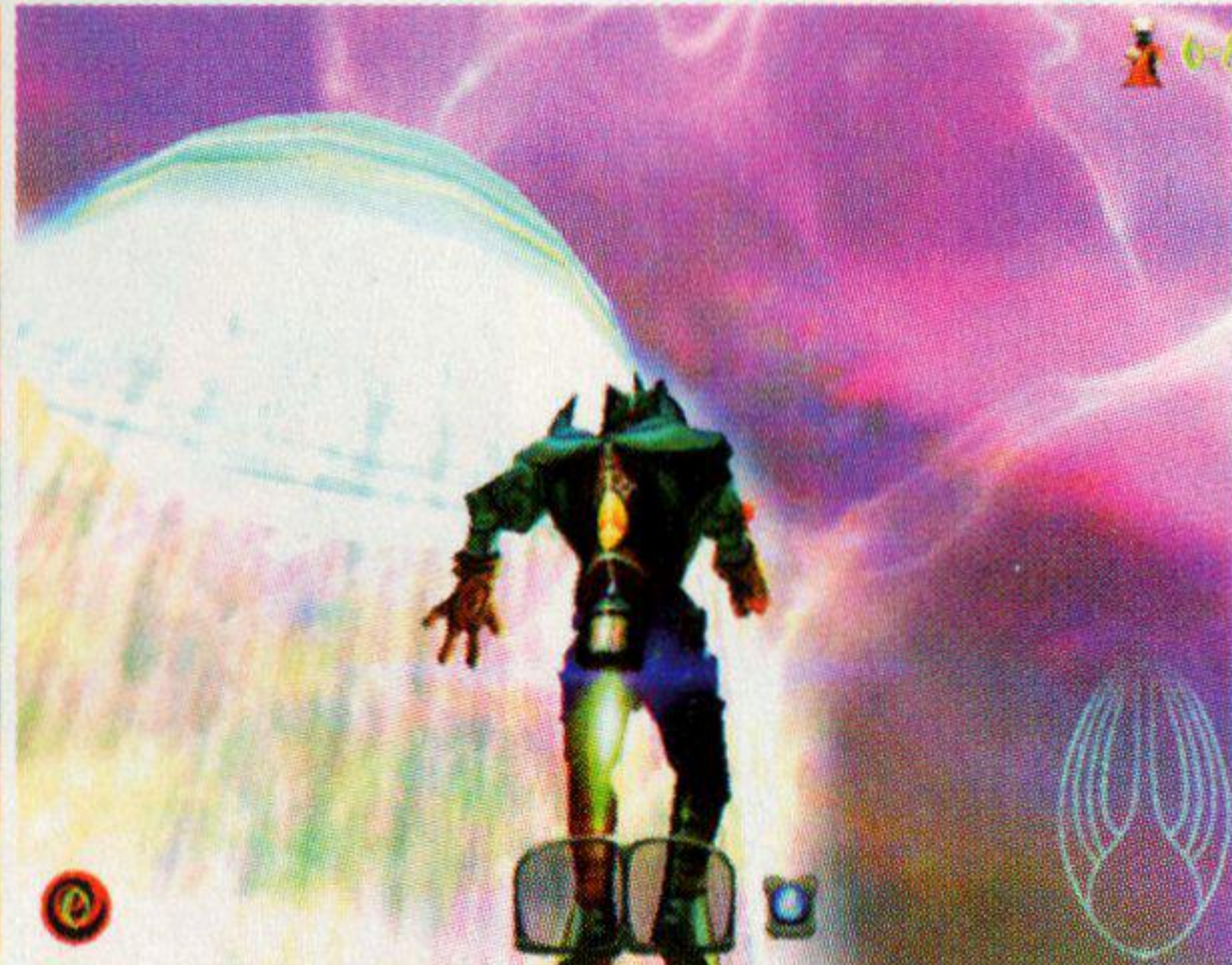
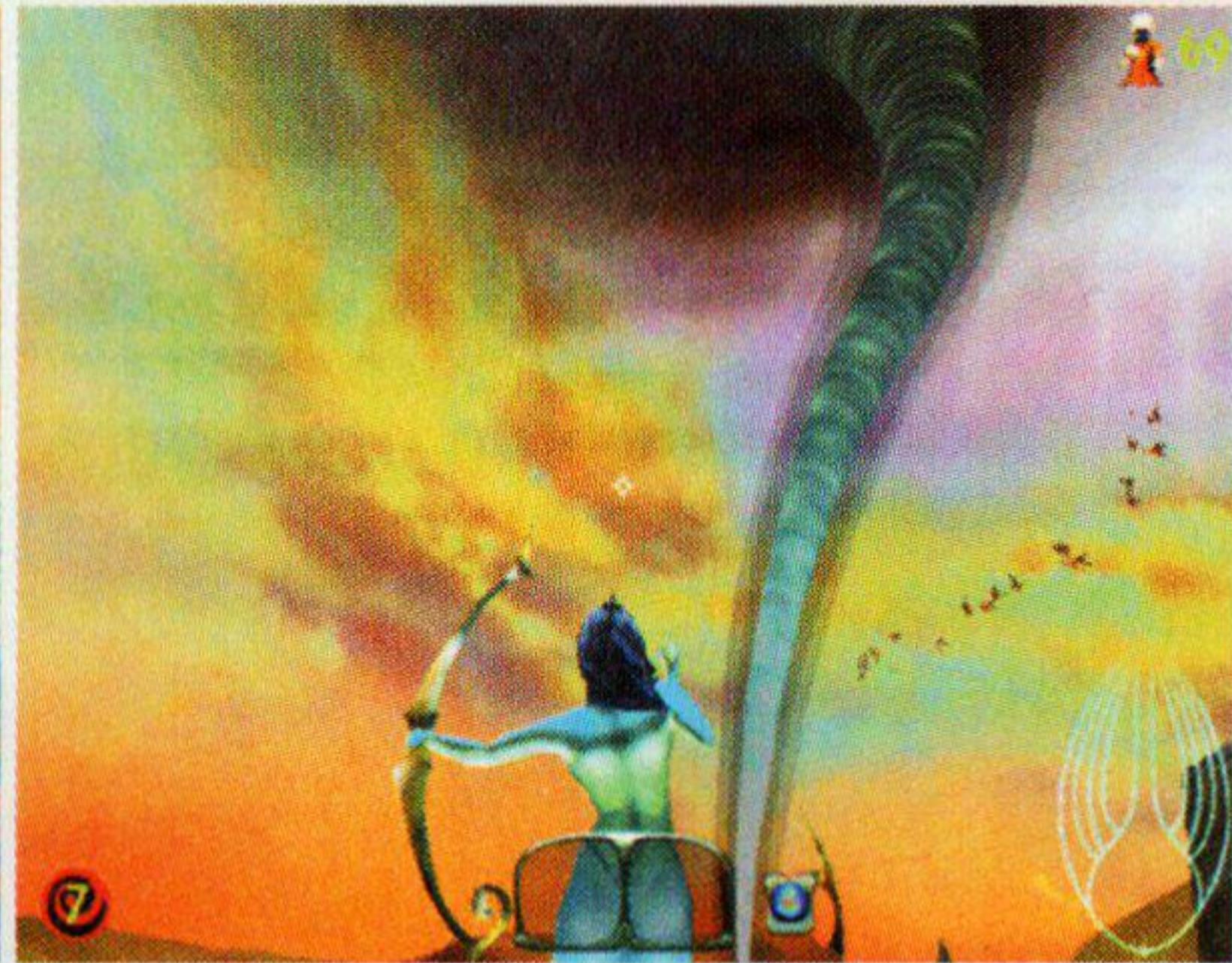
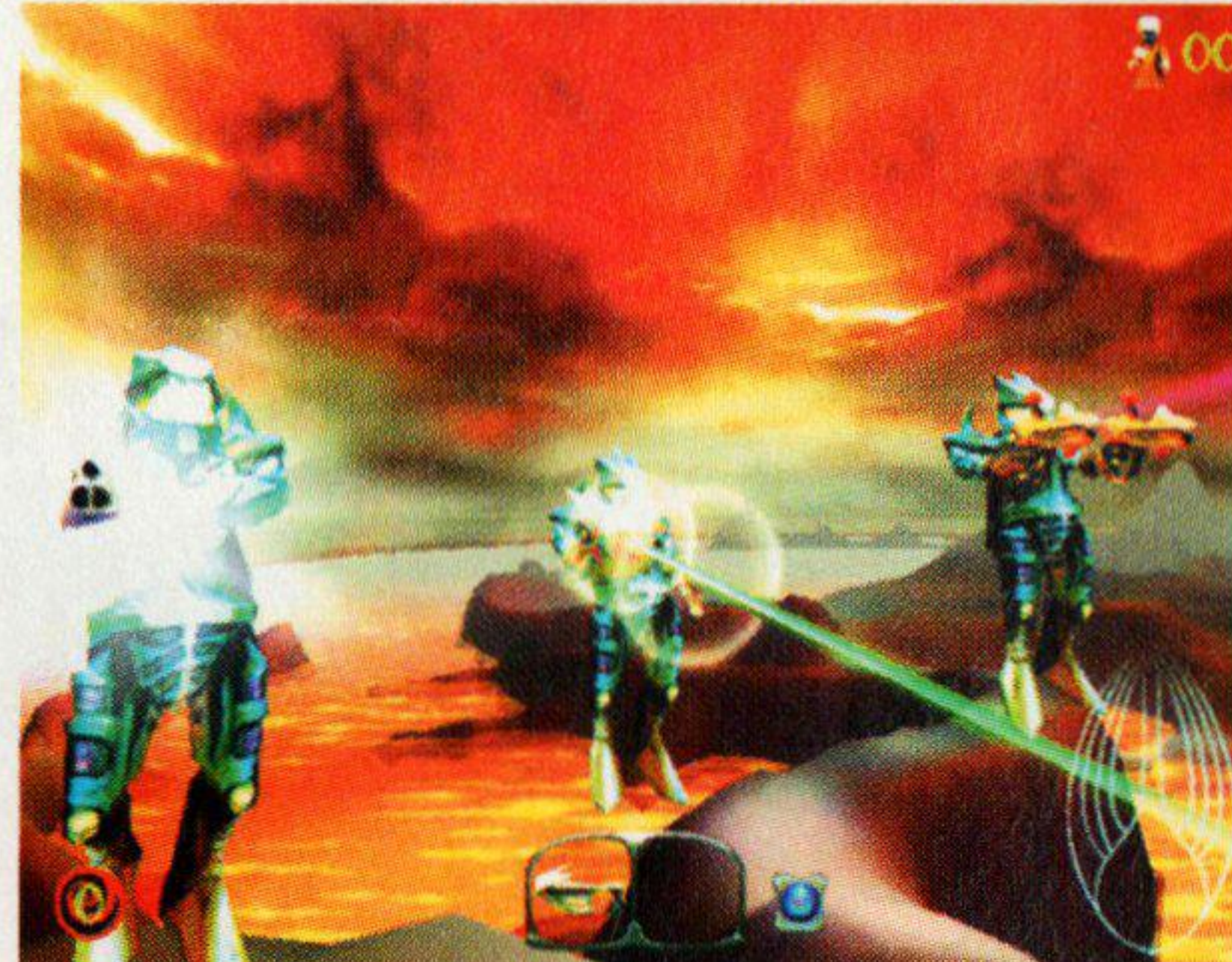
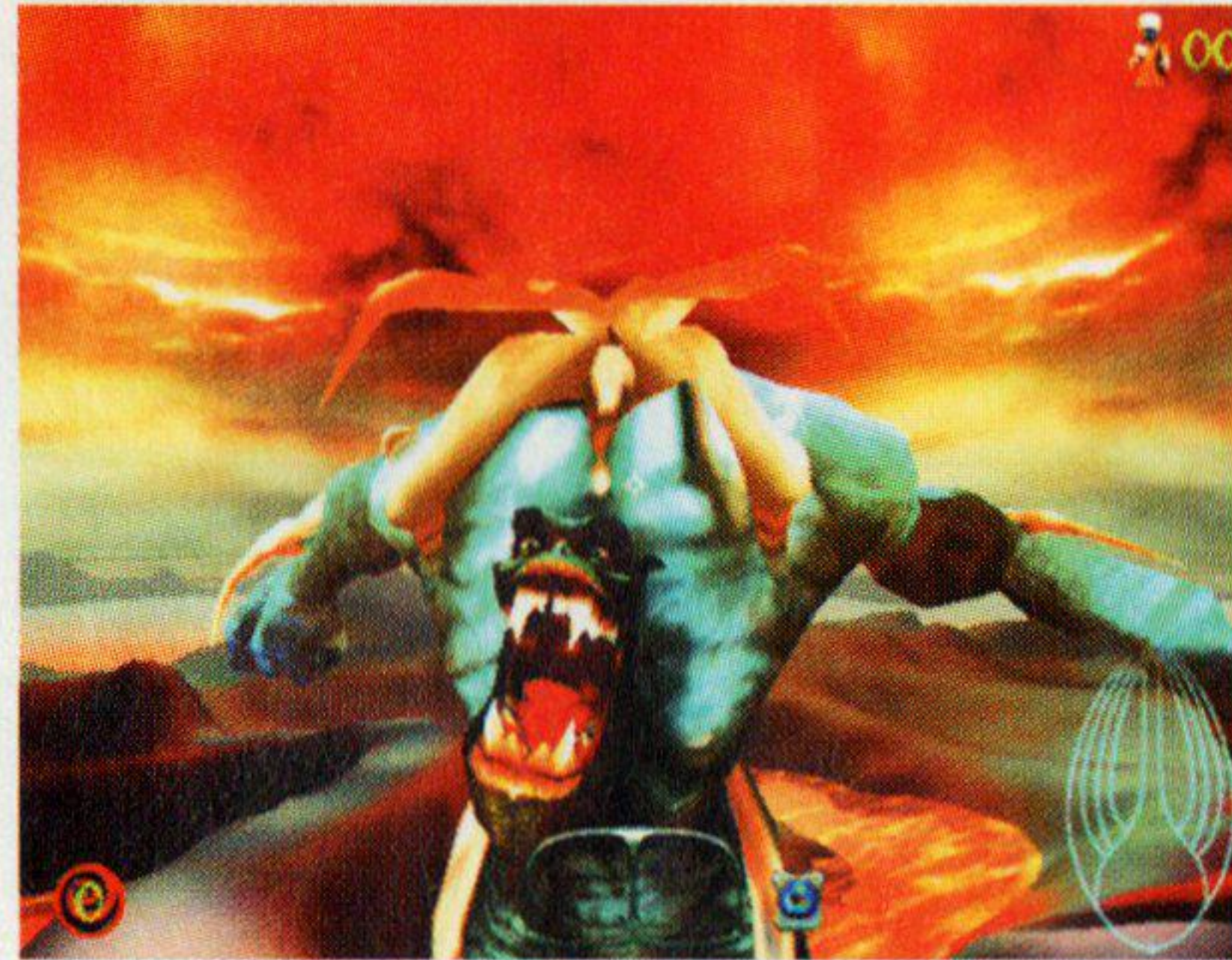
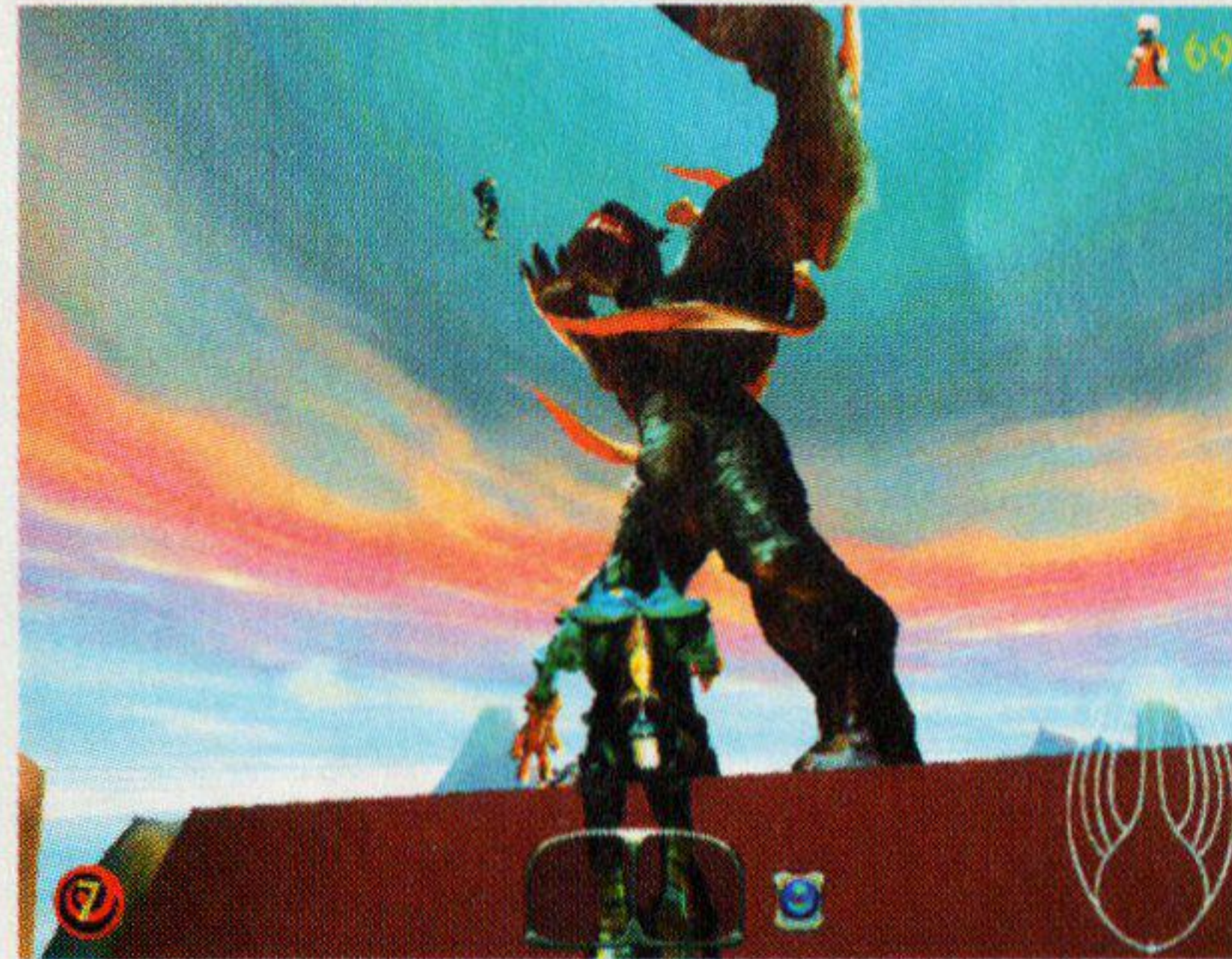
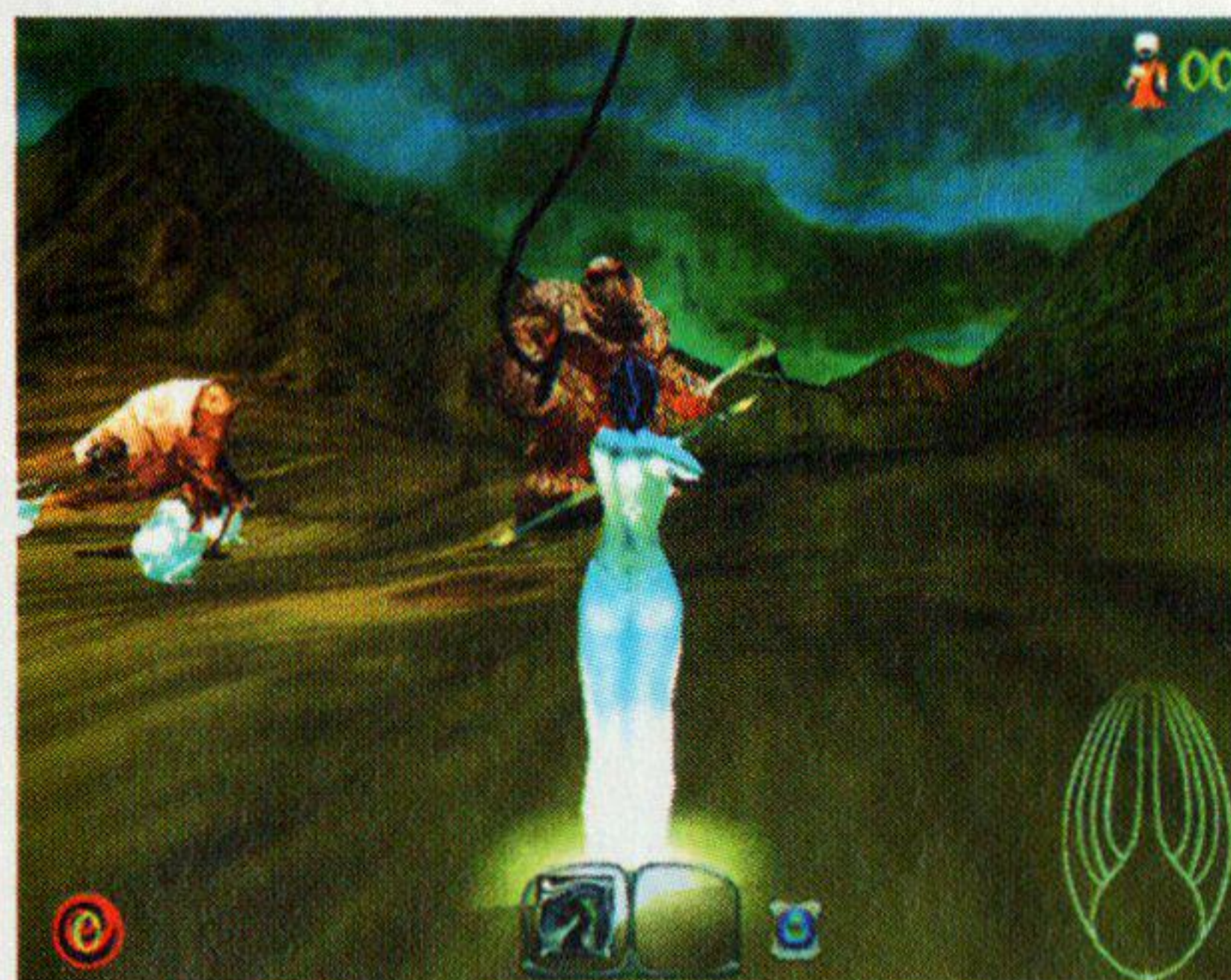
The island was once inhabited by a female race known as the Sea Reapers who, after attacks from the Meccaryns, created a powerful giant to defend their

Utopia. But the giant known as Kabuto turned against them, and after suffering a near total loss, they were forced to flee by their own creation. They now live on huge ships just off the shores, safe from Kabuto. The Meccaryn fleet, in ruins after their last defeat, has been forced to land on the island and battle with Kabuto. In the confusion, the Sea Reapers plan to regain their place on the island.

The player can take control over either

the technologically advanced Meccaryn fleet, the magical Sea Reapers, or the colossal Kabuto himself. As well as the three main races, there are also a number of independent cultures that can be interacted with – some will even provide bonuses for you later on in the game if you go out of your way to defend them from the other aggressors.

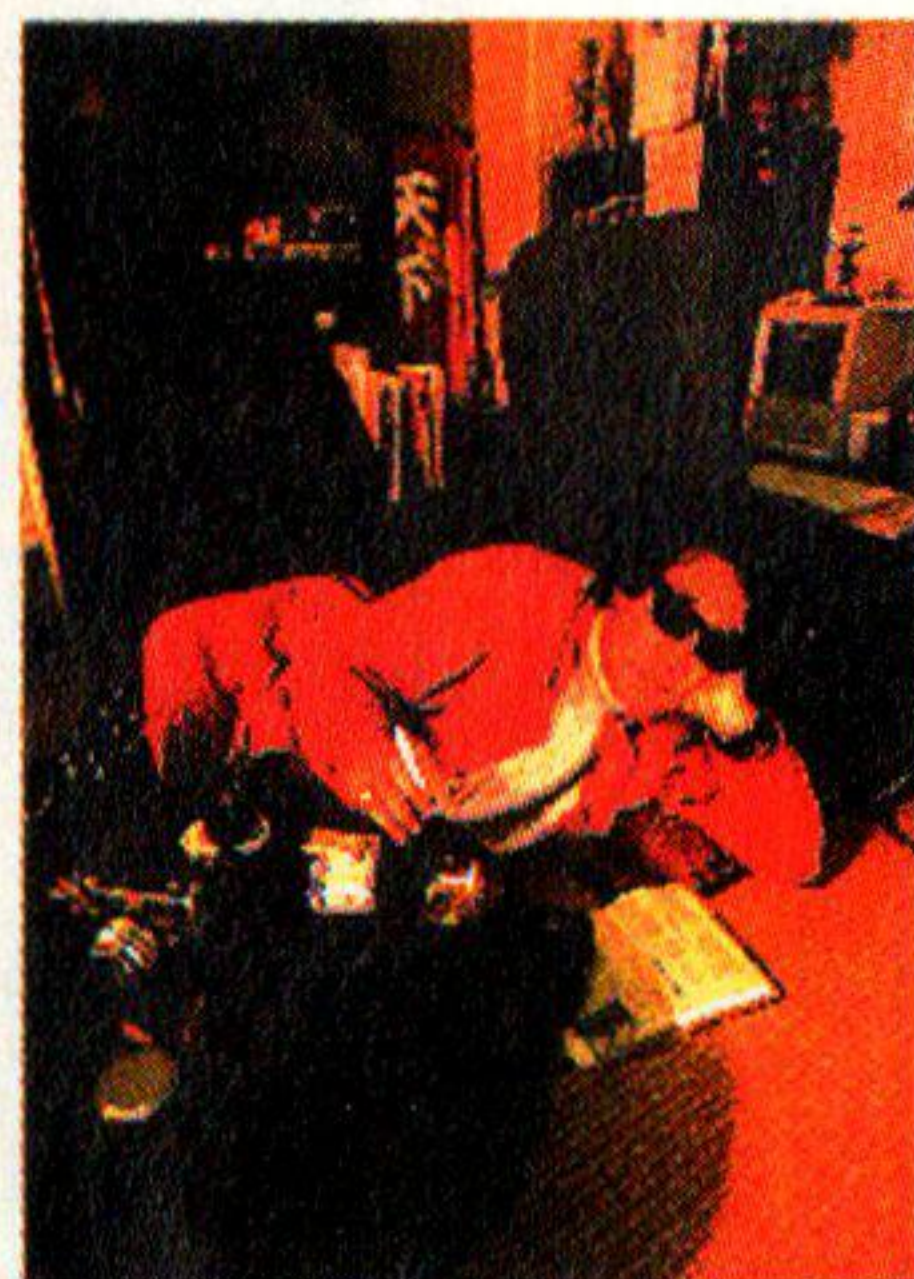
Giants: Citizen Kabuto is set for general release over spring '99.



EARLY '99
TOEJAM AND EARL III
UNKNOWN
TANK RACER
GROLIER INTERACTIVE
EXPENDABLE
RAGE SOFTWARE
LEGO RACERS
LEGO MEDIA
P.I.G
MICROPROSE
PRINCE NASEEM
BOXING
CODEMASTERS
RUUD GULLIT
STRIKER
RAGE SOFTWARE
POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING
EA
SENSIBLE SOCCER
GT INTERACTIVE
RC STUNT COPTER
INTERPLAY

JANUARY
MAX POWER
RACING
INFOGRAMES

FEBRUARY
RAINBOW SIX
RED STORM
ENTERTAINMENT
XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS
TITUS
TANKTICS
GREMLIN
KKND 2
INFOGRAMES



Mario, Zelda and Donkey Kong are just some of the games to spawn from this man's mind

INDUSTRY LEGENDS

Shigeru Miyamoto

Nintendo's head of games design, Shigeru Miyamoto, has been responsible for some of the greatest video games of all time. Born in 1952, he began making games in 1978, with the arcade game *Donkey Kong*. According to Nintendo folklore, for the two years before that Miyamoto wandered around Japan playing the banjo. He went on to make the *Donkey Kong* games, *Mario* games, the *Zelda* games, *Star Fox*, *F-Zero*, *Wave Race*, *PilotWings* and *Mario Kart* – just some of the games on his unmatched C.V. However, his finest hour is the just released *Zelda* game on N64. In a recent interview he was quoted as saying that "If we had more time, we could have tweaked a few things – put a few more characters on screen." Hey, to be this good takes a certain

amount of perfection...

His next project will be the follow-up to the ground-breaking *Super Mario 64* – a task that only Miyamoto could even hope to attempt. Apparently, because of the delays to *Zelda*, the game has just gone into development – the team only have Mario and Luigi up and running around the screen so far. And the game may be too late to appear on the N64. Launch title for Nintendo 2000?

Miyamoto-sama is often seen as a man with the creative mind of a child, which may well be true, but he no longer plays the games that he makes. He says that he bases his games on the adventures he had as a child, exploring caves and forests. No one can dispute the man's genius, and without him Nintendo wouldn't be the company that they are today.

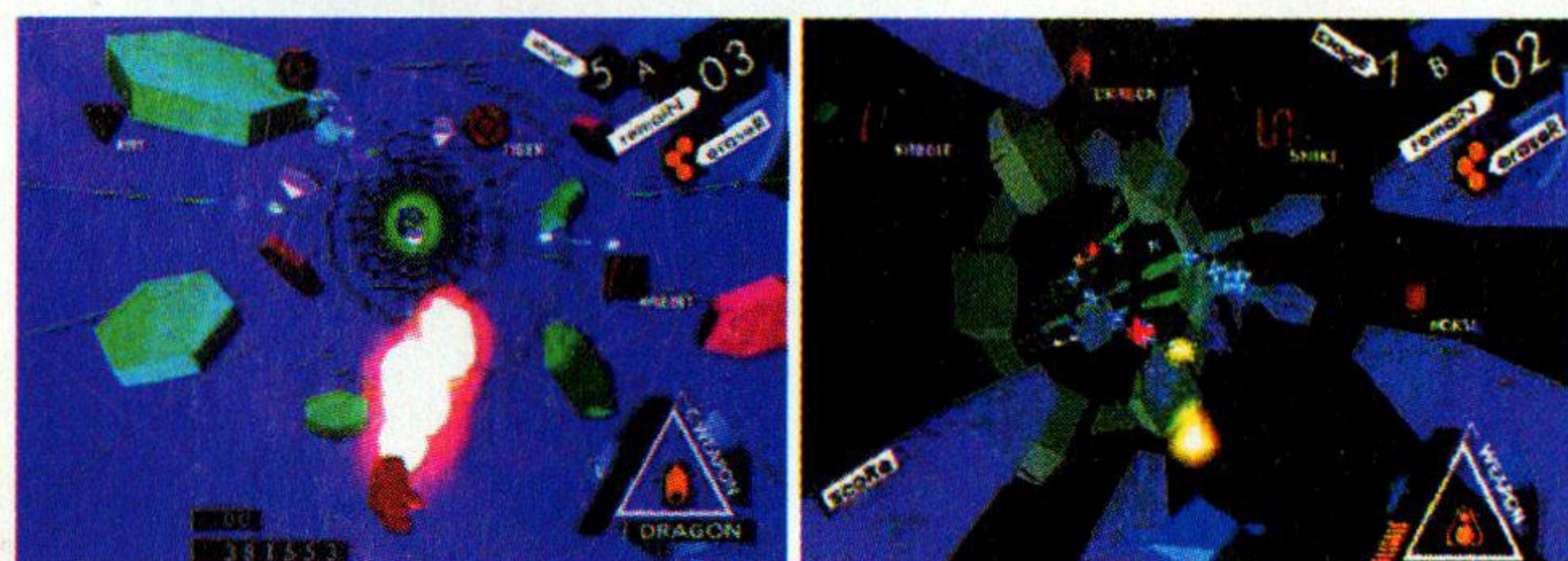
IS INTERNAL SECTION

Square take on the shoot-'em-up

Another new game from Square was announced this month, curiously entitled *Is Internal Section*. The game is said to be based on the popular eighties game *Tempest*, and will have strong musical connections. *Is Internal Section* features some of the most

psychedelic graphics yet seen on the PlayStation and looks more like a light show than a 3D shooter.

The game is scheduled for a February release in Japan, but Square have yet to announce whether the game will be released in the US or Europe.



SEGA'S SALES JOY

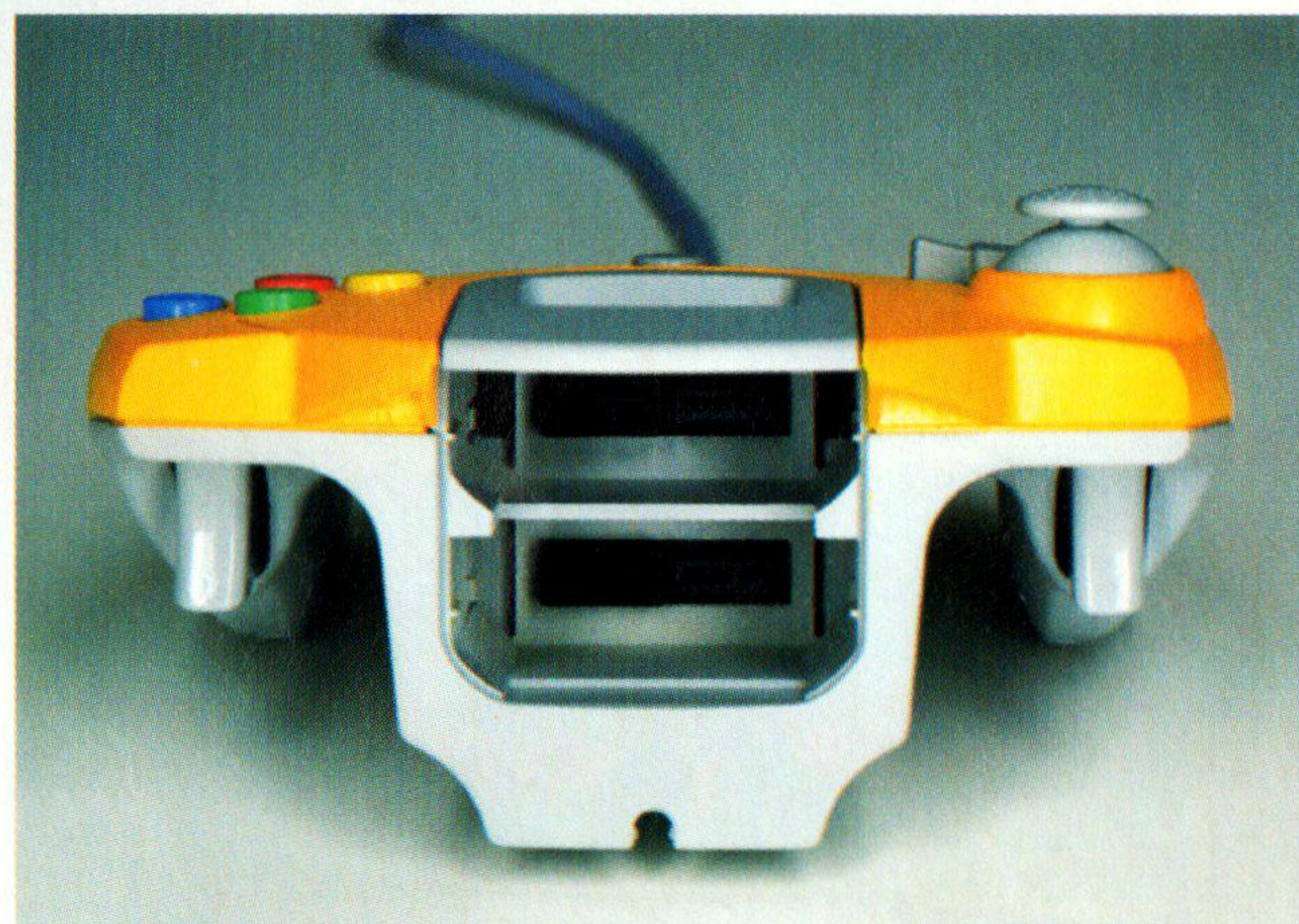
Official announcement of Dreamcast sales

Sega have revealed that the Dreamcast's launch in Japan was a complete success. A total of 140,830 units were sold in the first three days after launch and 9,000 were used for promotional purposes. *Virtua Fighter* sold a total of 131,888 copies and came in second to *Zelda 64* in the Japanese charts.

The other Dreamcast games, however, sold poorly in

comparison. *Godzilla Generations* (16th in the charts) sold 22,079 units, *Pen Pen Tricelon* (21st) sold 17,079 units and *July* (25th) only managed 14,013 units.

Despite this great news for Sega, there have been reports that shops are suffering shortages of the machines. Sega maintain that production of the Dreamcast is being speeded up to meet the huge demand.



MARCH

ALIEN

RESURRECTION

FOX INTERACTIVE

METAL GEAR

SOLID

KONAMI

LEGACY OF KAIN:

SOUL REAVER

EIDOS (PIC)

APRIL

X-MEN

ACTIVISION

MESSIAH

INTERPLAY

V-RALLY 2

INFOGRAMES

MAY

BLOODSHOT

ACCLAIM

SHADOWMAN

ACCLAIM

SURVIVOR:

DAY ONE

KONAMI

SUMMER

SILENT HILL

KONAMI

**DECEMBER**

ANIMANIACS

TEN PIN ALLEY

ASC GAMES

FINAL FANTASY VIII

SQUARESOFT (PIC)

TBA

GEX 3

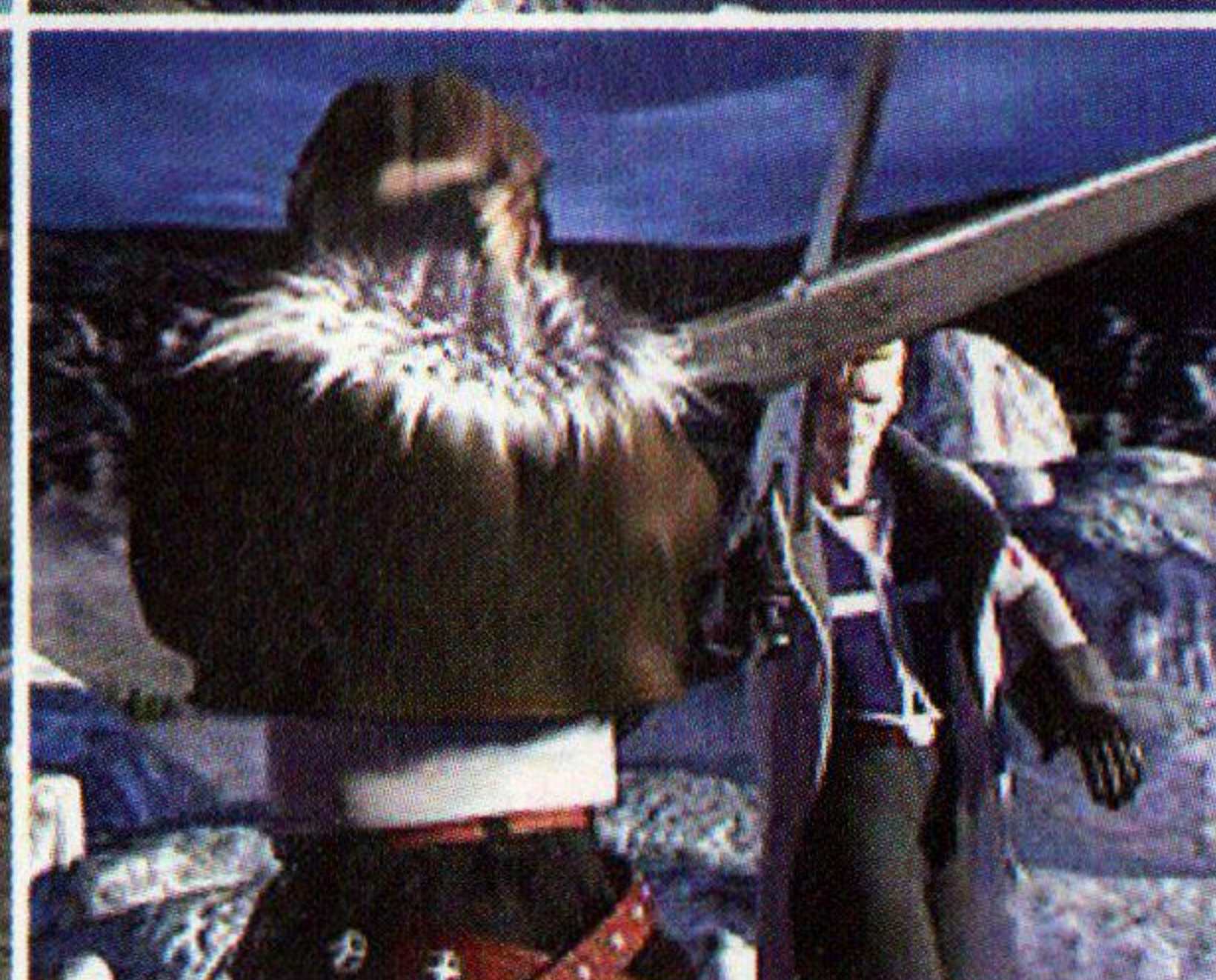
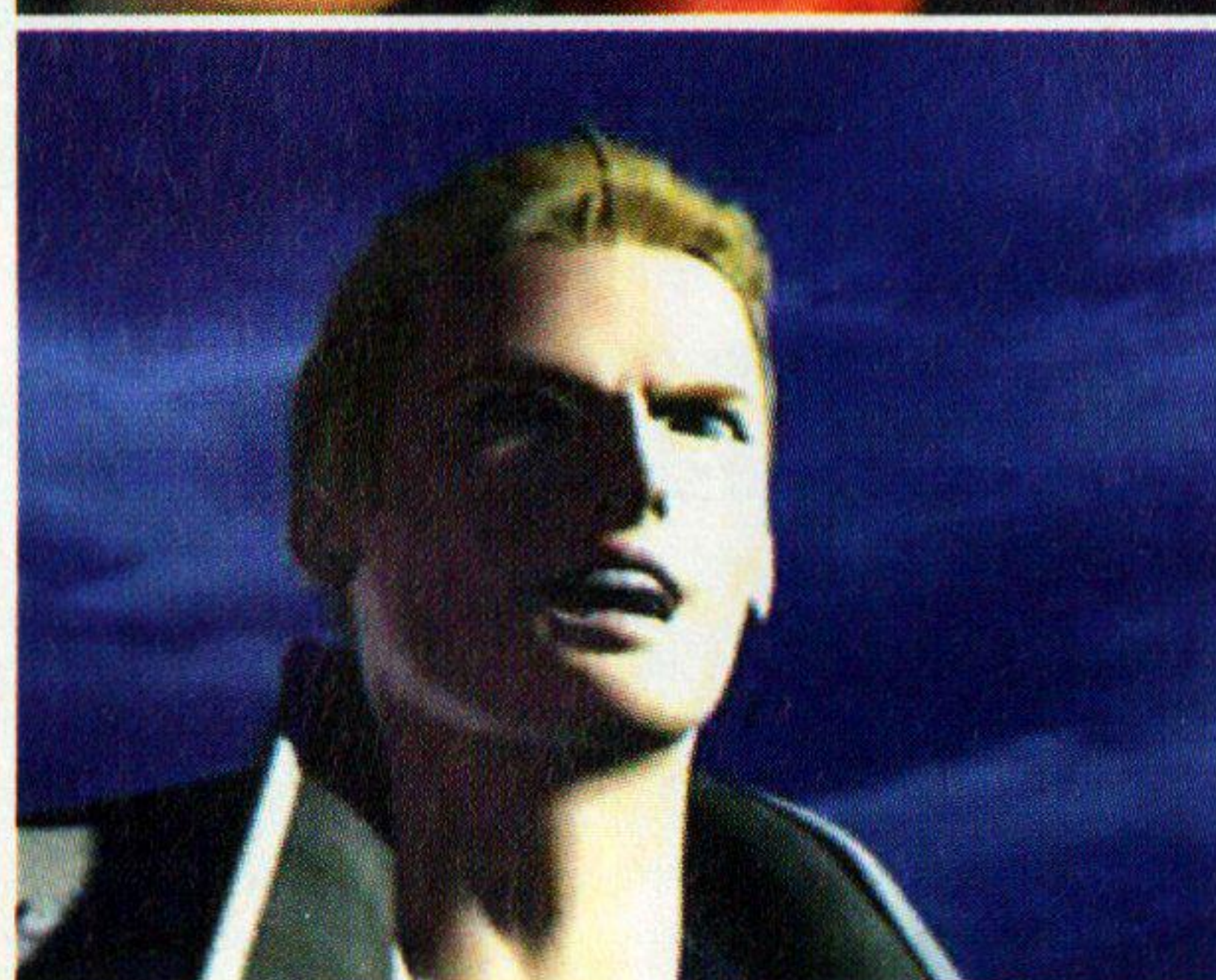
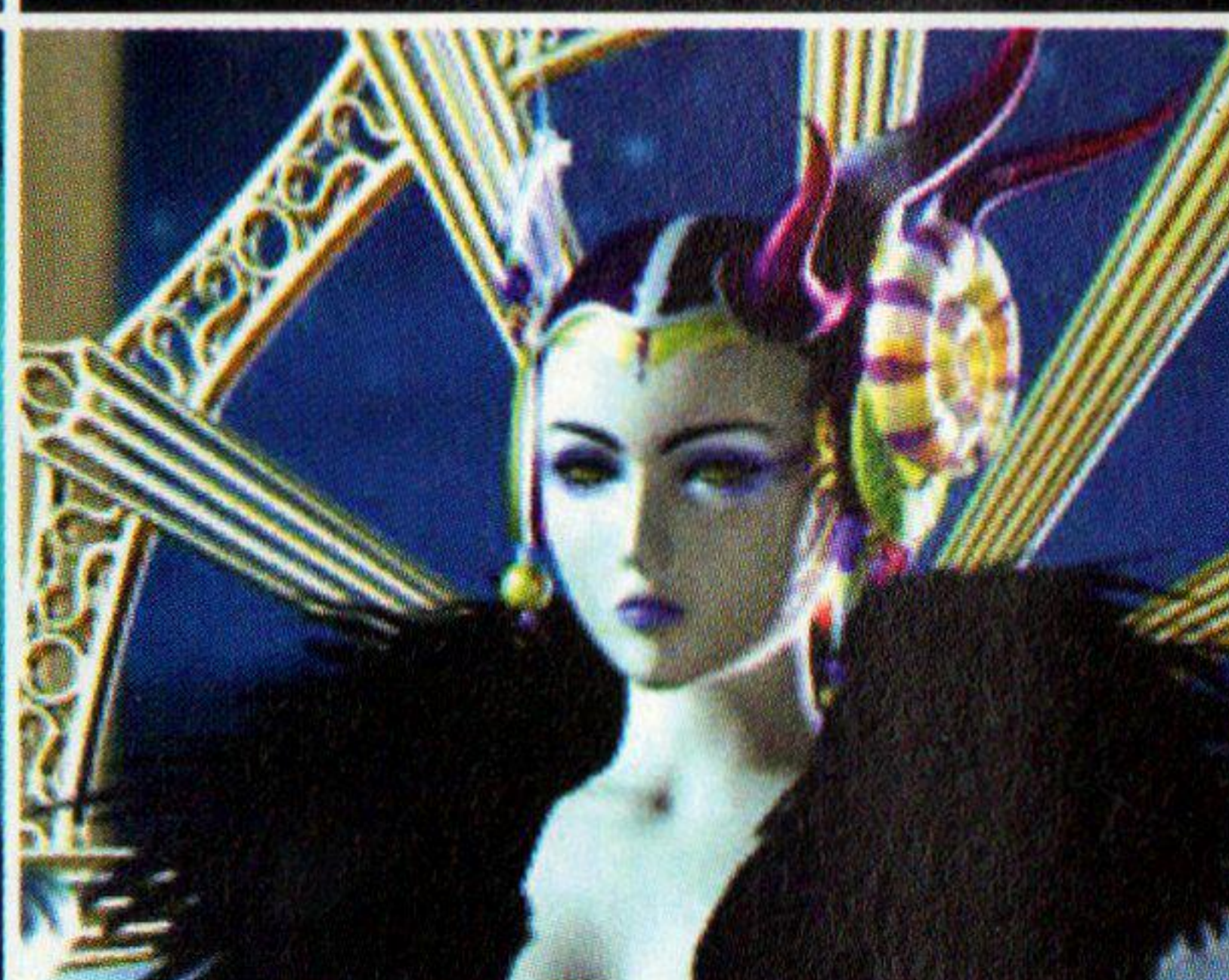
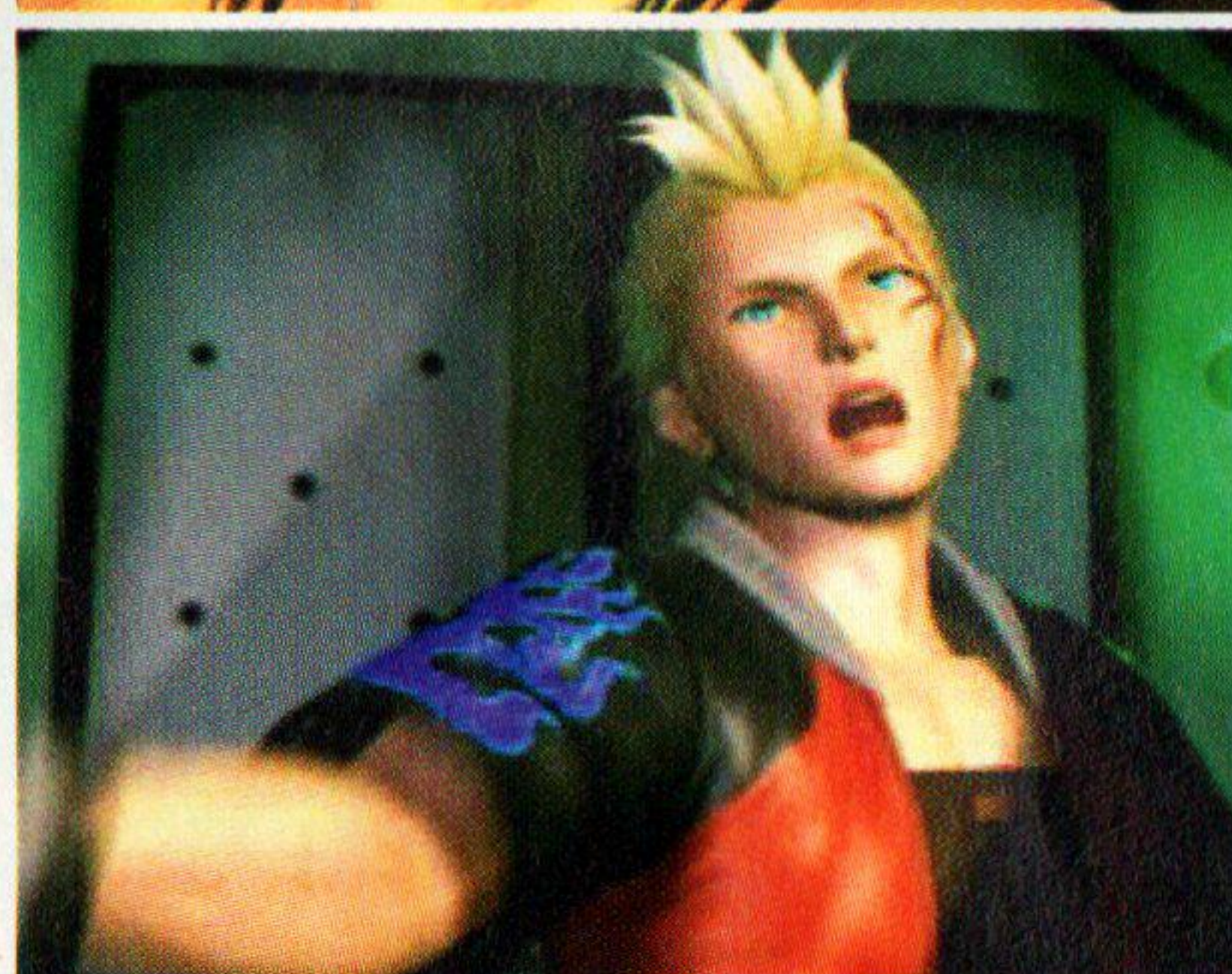
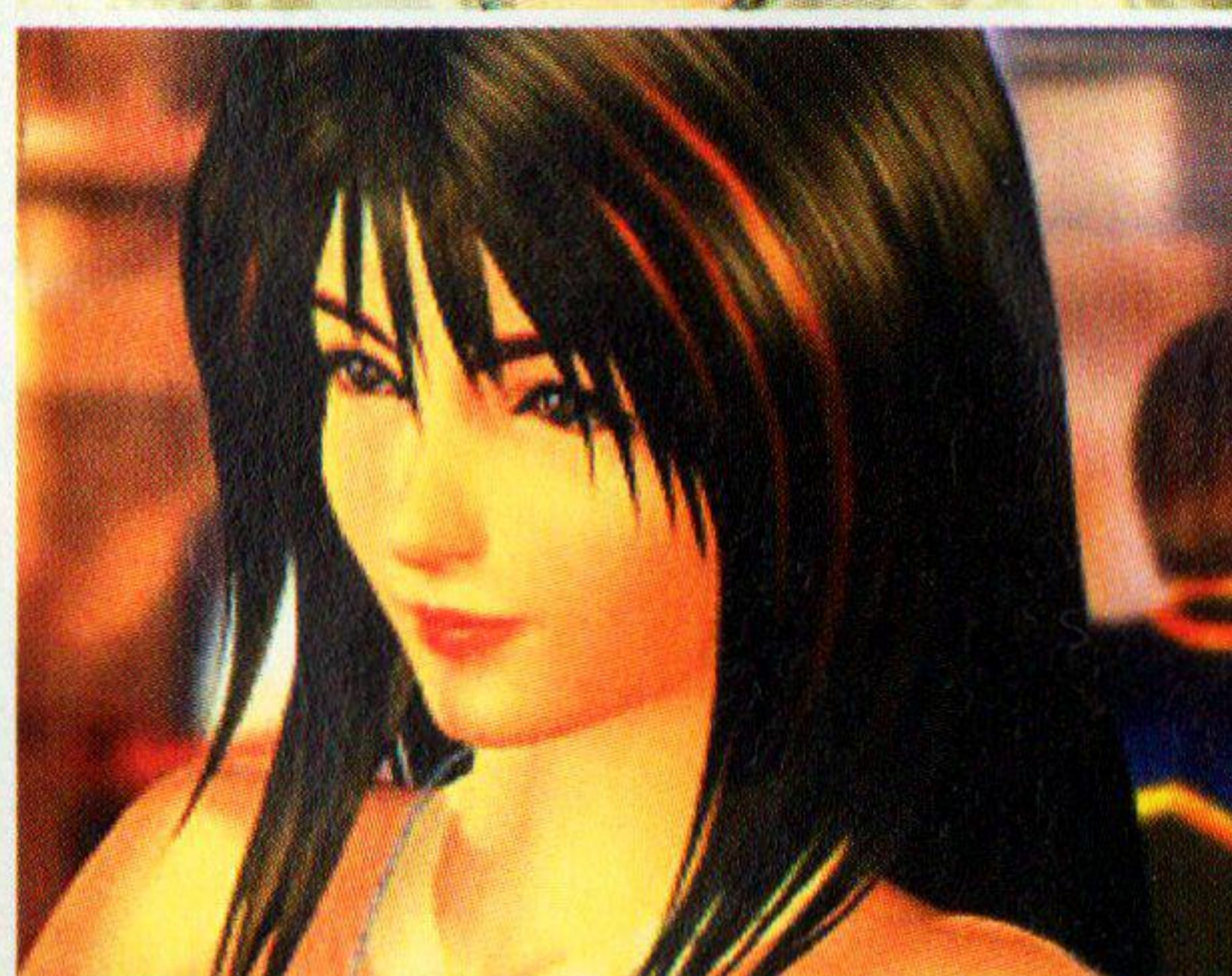
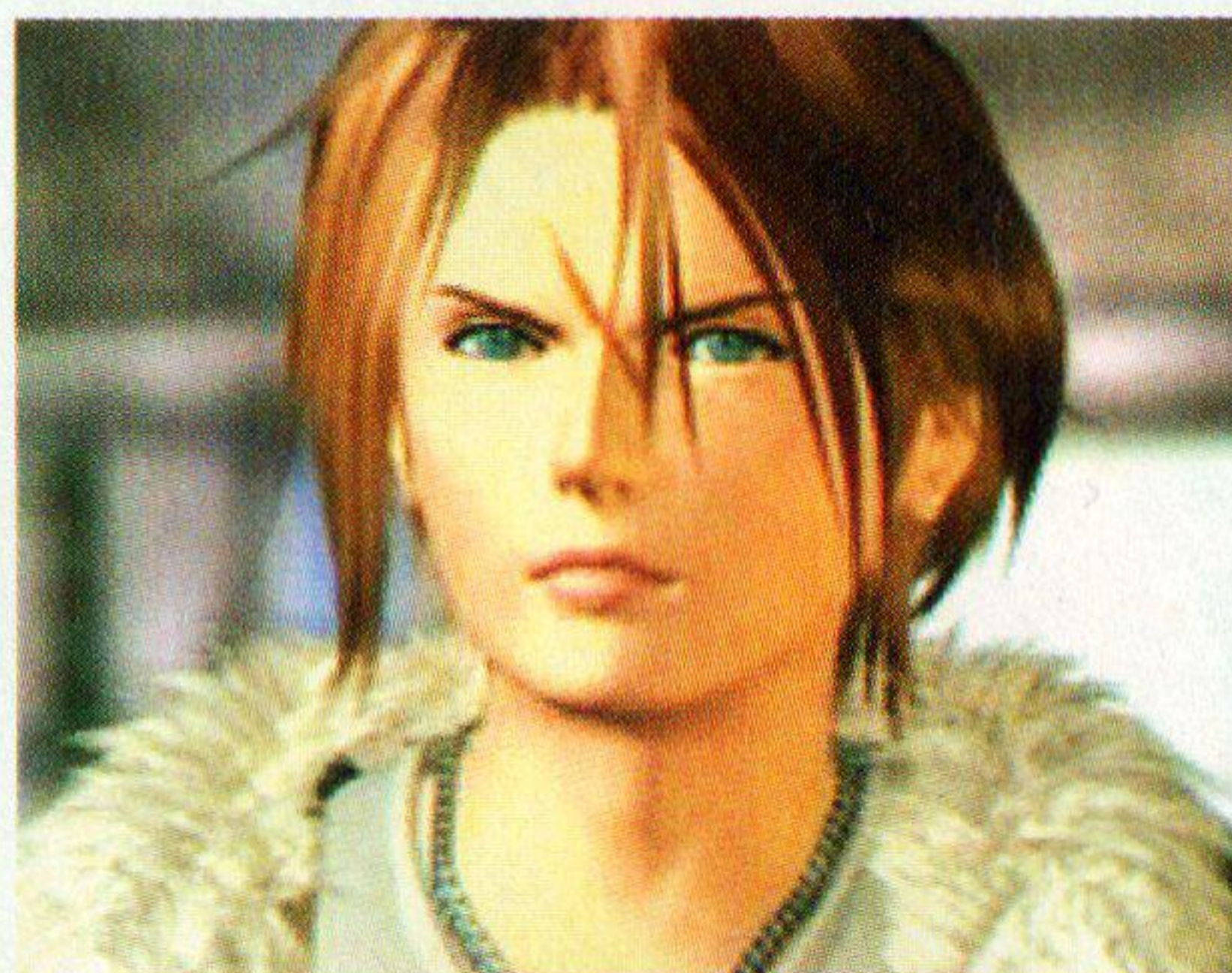
EIDOS

UPDATE: FINAL FANTASY VIII

As Japan gears up for the Japanese launch of *Final Fantasy VIII*, more and more sites dedicated to the game are stumbling across new images. The screens below, taken from the incredible cut scenes, are a good example of the quality that we've all been hoping for, and, with any luck, will experience shortly after its launch.

The Japanese release date of April looks to be holding, and pre-ordered sales are

going through the roof. Hitting the shelves for the equivalent of £30, high street stores are already worried that they will not be able meet demand for what will surely become the biggest and fastest selling game of all-time, beating the record still held by *Final Fantasy VII*. Of course, we won't be able to get an English version until it is released in America this autumn, or hopefully before Christmas in the UK.



CAUGHT IN THE WEB

In a new regular slot we introduce you to some of the websites frequented by the Total CONTROL team

Square's Japanese home page is the best place to get all the latest news on their products for the next year. As you might expect from a company with an eye for detail like Square, this is an excellently designed and easy to use site. However, unless your browser can display Japanese and you can read it, you'll have to make do with the pictures. Ah well, at least you can gawp at the gorgeous *FFVIII* renders www.square.co.jp



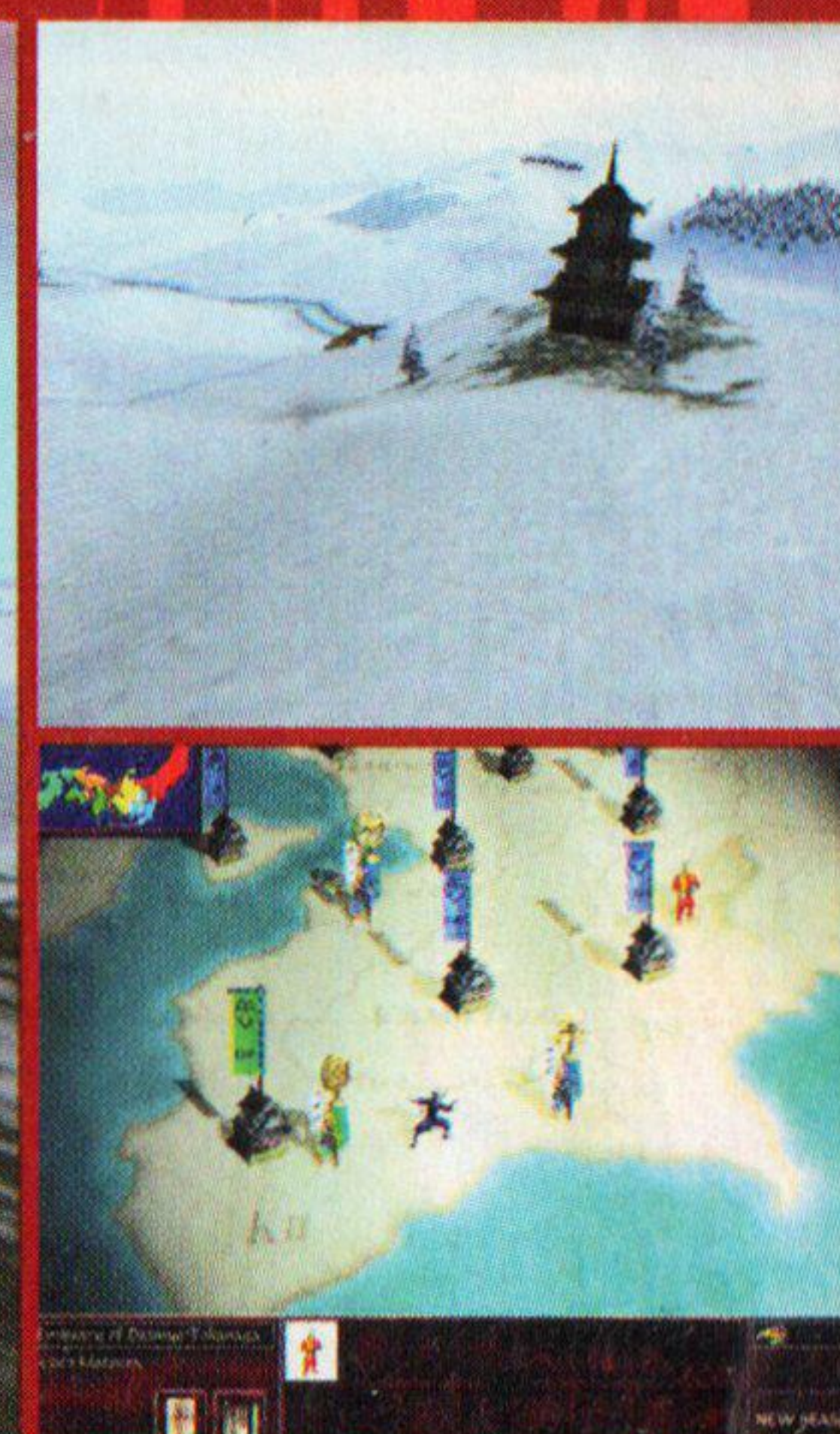


Shogun: Total War

Five hundred years ago, **Japan was in turmoil**. Civil war tore the country apart as **feudal warlords** struggled for the **ultimate prize**: the title of **Shogun, supreme dictator** of all Japan.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Dreamtime Interactive
DEVELOPER	The Creative Assembly
STYLE	Military Strategy
PLAYERS	1-16



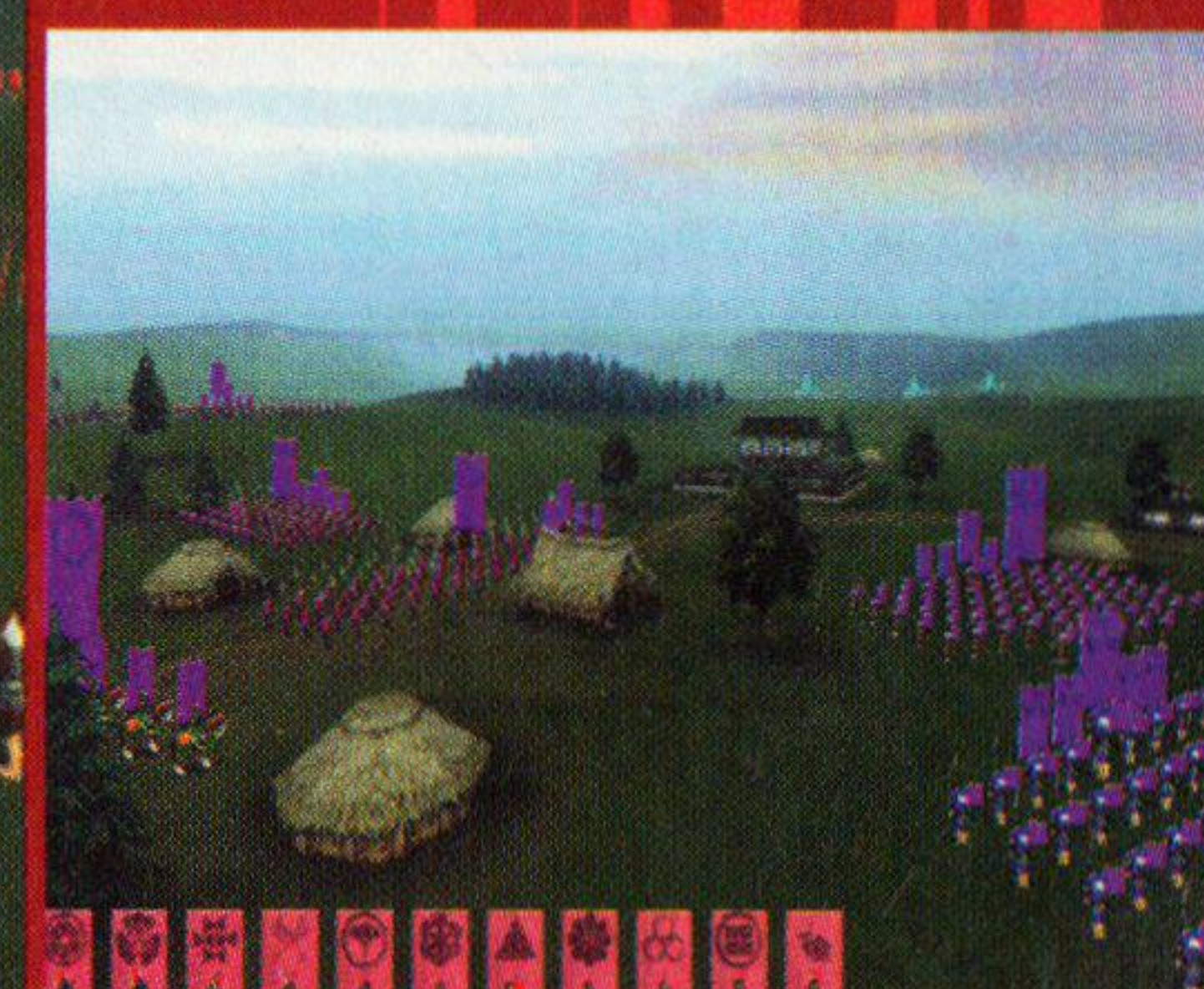
That may look like a small scouting party, but there could be another thousand over the hill

There have been many attempts to make a really good computer wargame over the years. TalonSoft's classic *Eastern Front* was one of the earliest examples – a strategic game focusing on the major tank battles towards the end of WWII. They have followed up that success with mission packs and sequels. Other noteworthy titles have included Microsoft's *Close Combat* series of squad-level tactical battle games, *Steel Panthers I, II* and *III* from SSI, and Interactive Magic's *Great Battles* trilogy, featuring the exploits of Alexander the Great, Hannibal and Julius Caesar. More recently Sid Meier's *Gettysburg* attempted to bring to life a crucial battle of the American Civil War.

All of these games have been well-received by both reviewers and the general public, but none have ever really taken off, except among hard-core wargaming fanatics. Wargames tend to be written with the emphasis on tactics and some degree of historical accuracy, rather than the niceties we take for granted in other genres. Apart from the most recent examples, they have suffered from blocky graphics, embarrassingly bad sound effects, over-complicated gameplay and, worst of all, unconvincing AI. Even some of the newer games still have this last problem, and if you have played any of the games in question, or any one of a million real-time strategy games, you will know what I mean.

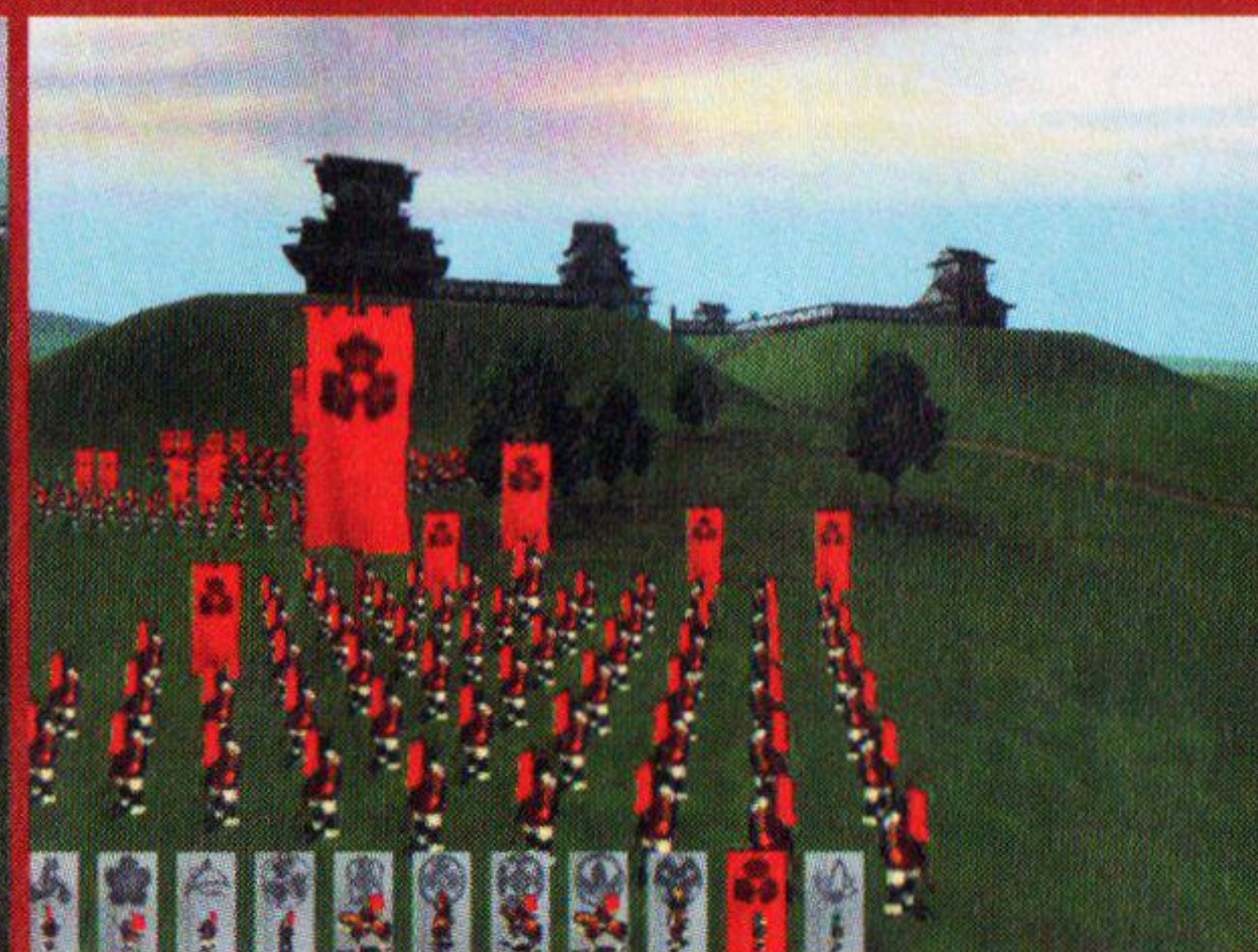
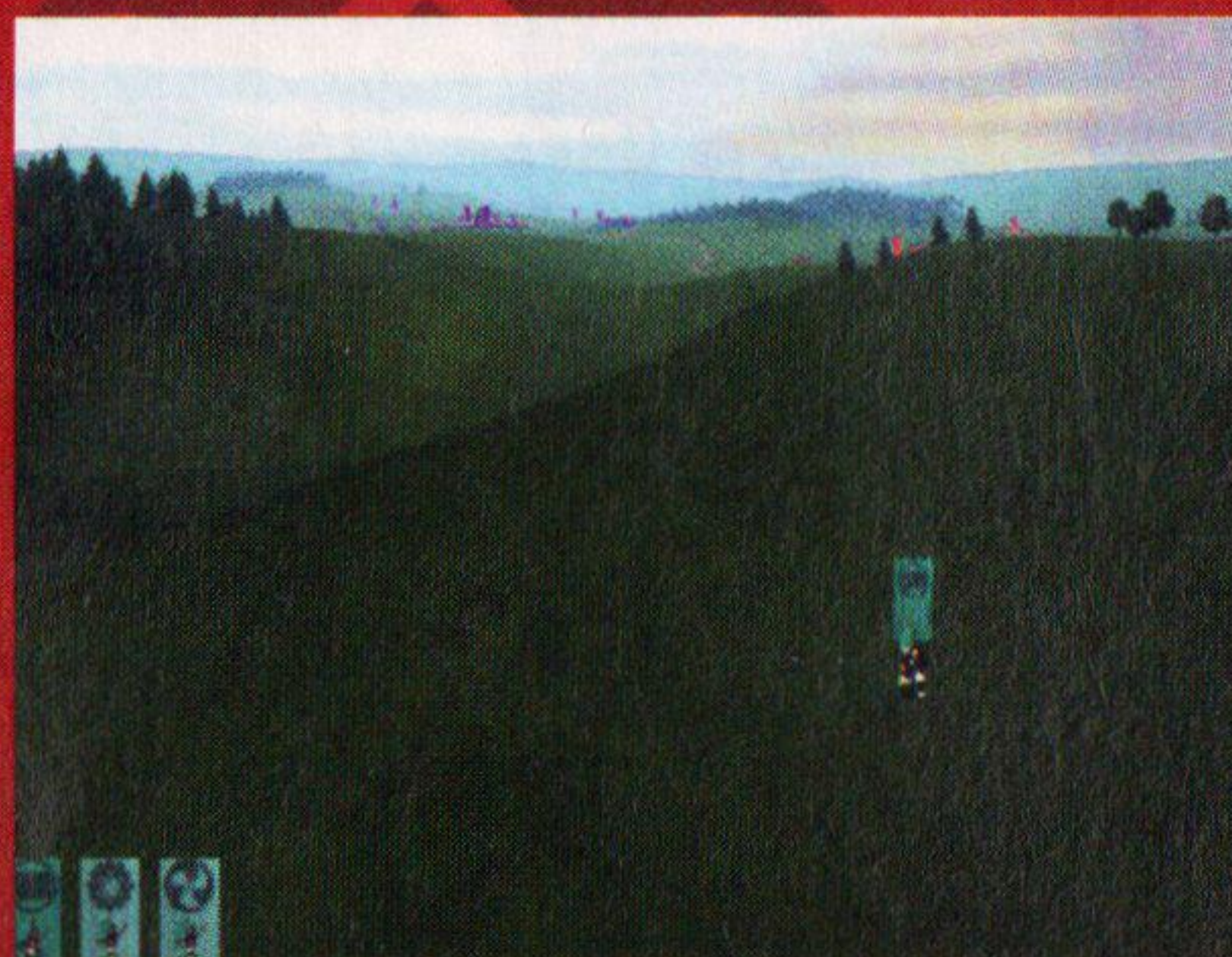
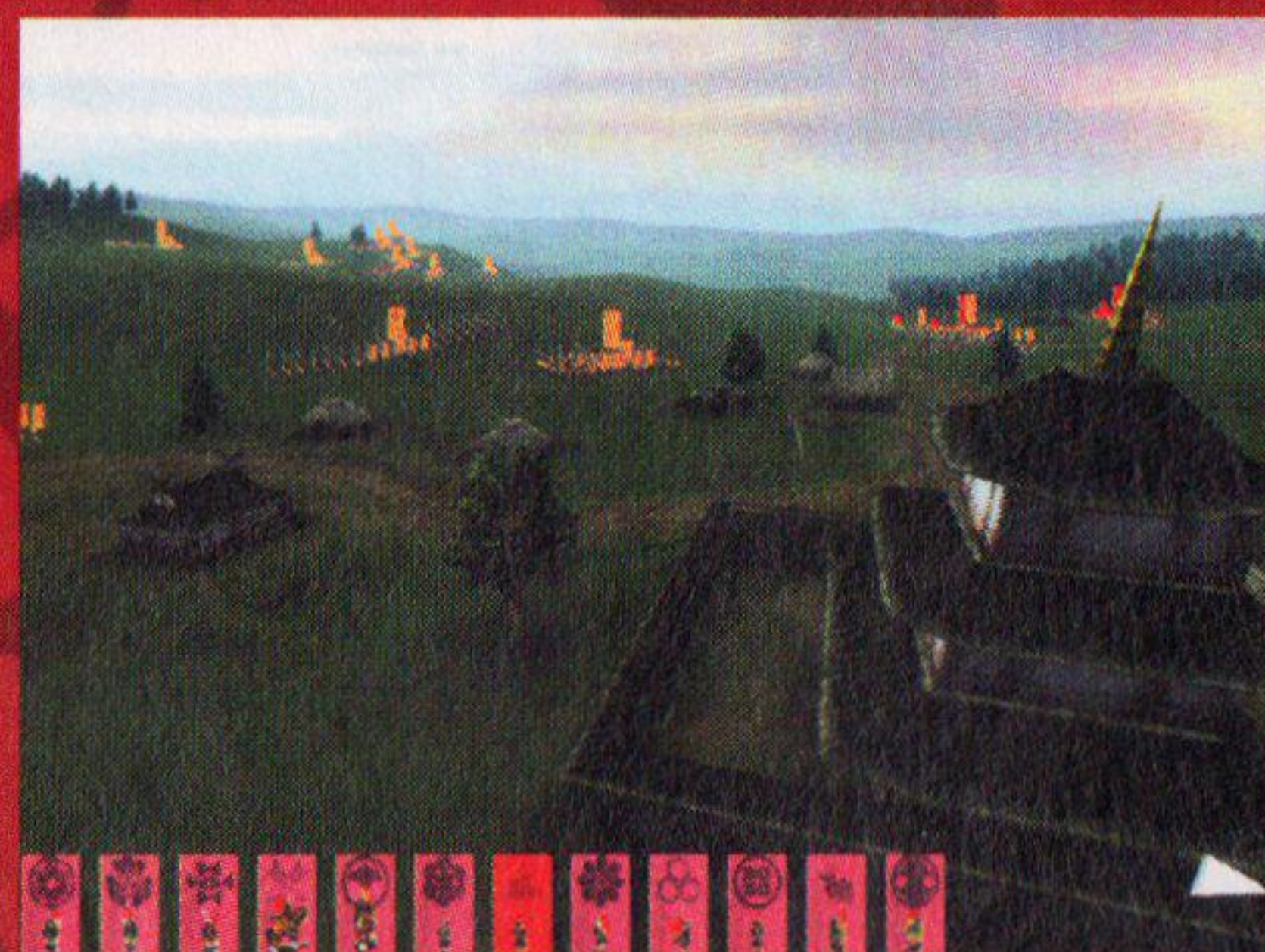
Critical errors

You have probably come across situations in many strategy games where you order a group of tanks to cross a bridge, but half of them decide they can't get across and take a detour straight into an ambush. Or perhaps you order a rifle regiment





The ceremonial armour of a Samurai warrior was heavy, but effective



Sun Tzu taught that battles should be fought out in the open. These breathtaking landscapes allow you to test that theory

to fire on an enemy unit at long range, but instead they decide to target a closer group, in the process slaughtering the friendly cavalry unit which happens to be in the way. Mistakes of this type can ruin a game for you when committed by your own troops and make the computer an unsatisfactory opponent, too easy to beat by exploiting the weaknesses of the program.

Sussex-based developers, The Creative Assembly believe that they have overcome these problems at last, and are working on a tactical wargame which will take the genre into the next millennium. The game is called *Shogun*, and it is set in Japan, between 1450 and 1600, the era of the Samurai and a time of political upheaval and civil war. The game has a number of unique features which should serve to set it apart from any previous wargame.

Clever people

The main thing which raises *Shogun* above every other game in its class is its use of highly sophisticated artificial

intelligence programming – and lots of it. The game engine can place on screen up to five thousand individual troops, and, incredibly, each and every one of them is controlled by its own AI routine. Every single soldier in your vast army has a skill rating, morale and the ability to move and fight in an intelligent manner. All the soldiers in your army will gain experience as the game progresses and will become better warriors the more battles they fight. Some may even become famous heroes, fighting under their own banner and boosting the morale of the troops around them. This has the affect of making you place a certain value on the life of your soldiers, as the longer they survive, the better they become. Experience affects morale as well as fighting skill. A unit of hardened veterans is a lot less likely to break and flee than a bunch of raw recruits. The rules built into the AI programming are based on the classical handbook of warfare, Sun Tzu's Art of War. This Chinese text was written in about 400BC, and for centuries formed the basis of military thinking in both China and Japan. It is still studied to this day throughout the world

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL DE PLATER, PRODUCER OF SHOGUN

Michael De Plater, the producer of *Shogun*, kindly took the time to answer a few questions for Total CONTROL...

TC: When people see the name *Shogun*, obviously a lot of them are going to think of the James Clavell book. Is there any connection between the book and your game?

MDP: Not at all, except in so far as we're both talking about the same subject matter. We decided to set the game in that period of feudal Japan, that period of warfare, and the culmination of that period of warfare was that one guy took over the entire country and was the Shogun, so it's such a good name, because it embodies what the whole objective of the game is. What we're actually trying to do is differentiate it as much as we can from anything else. That's why it's *Total War*, and wherever the name appears it will be *Shogun: Total War*.

That then, of course, leads on to future products and derivatives. So when we do the Roman one, for example, or Ghengis Khan or whatever it might be...

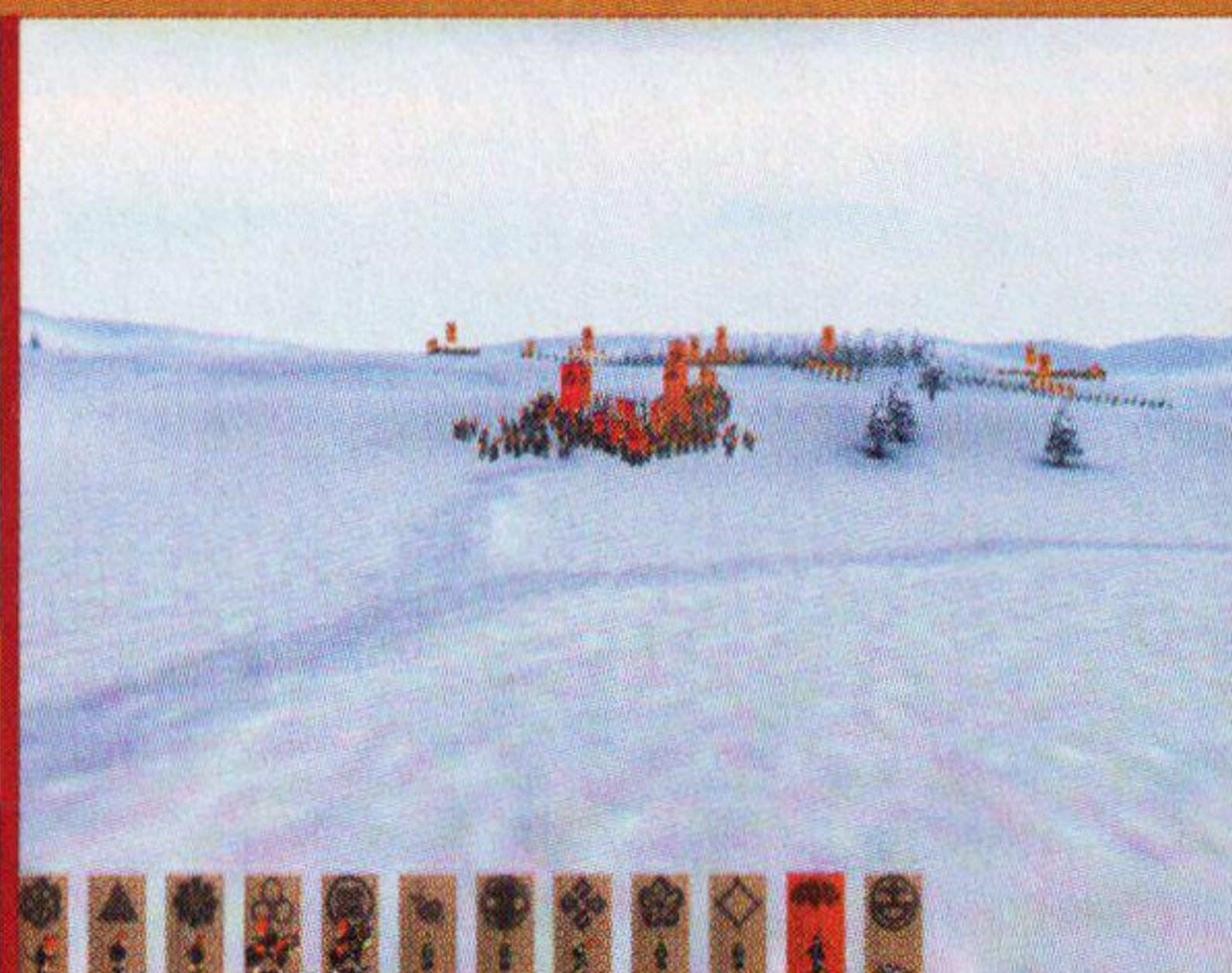
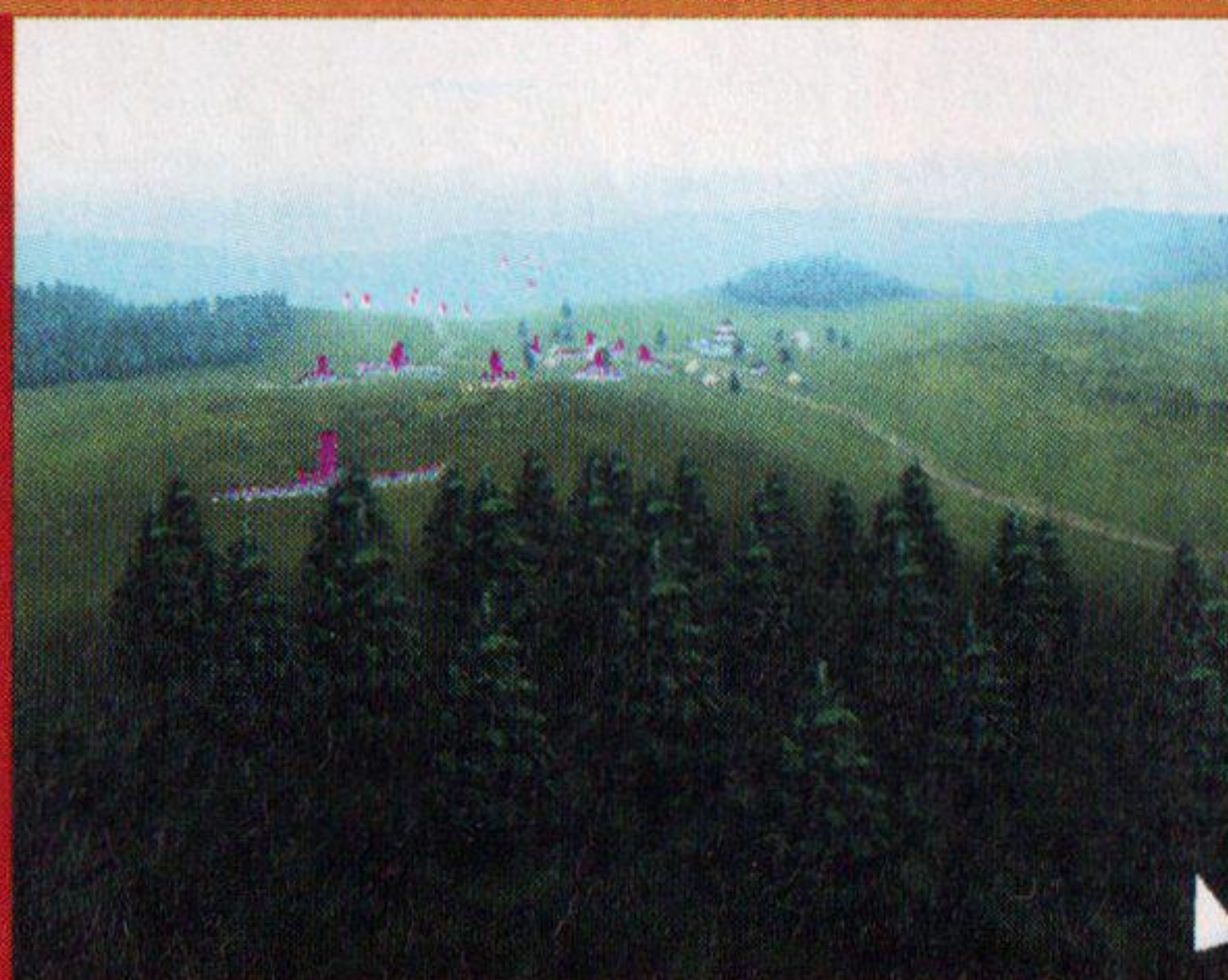
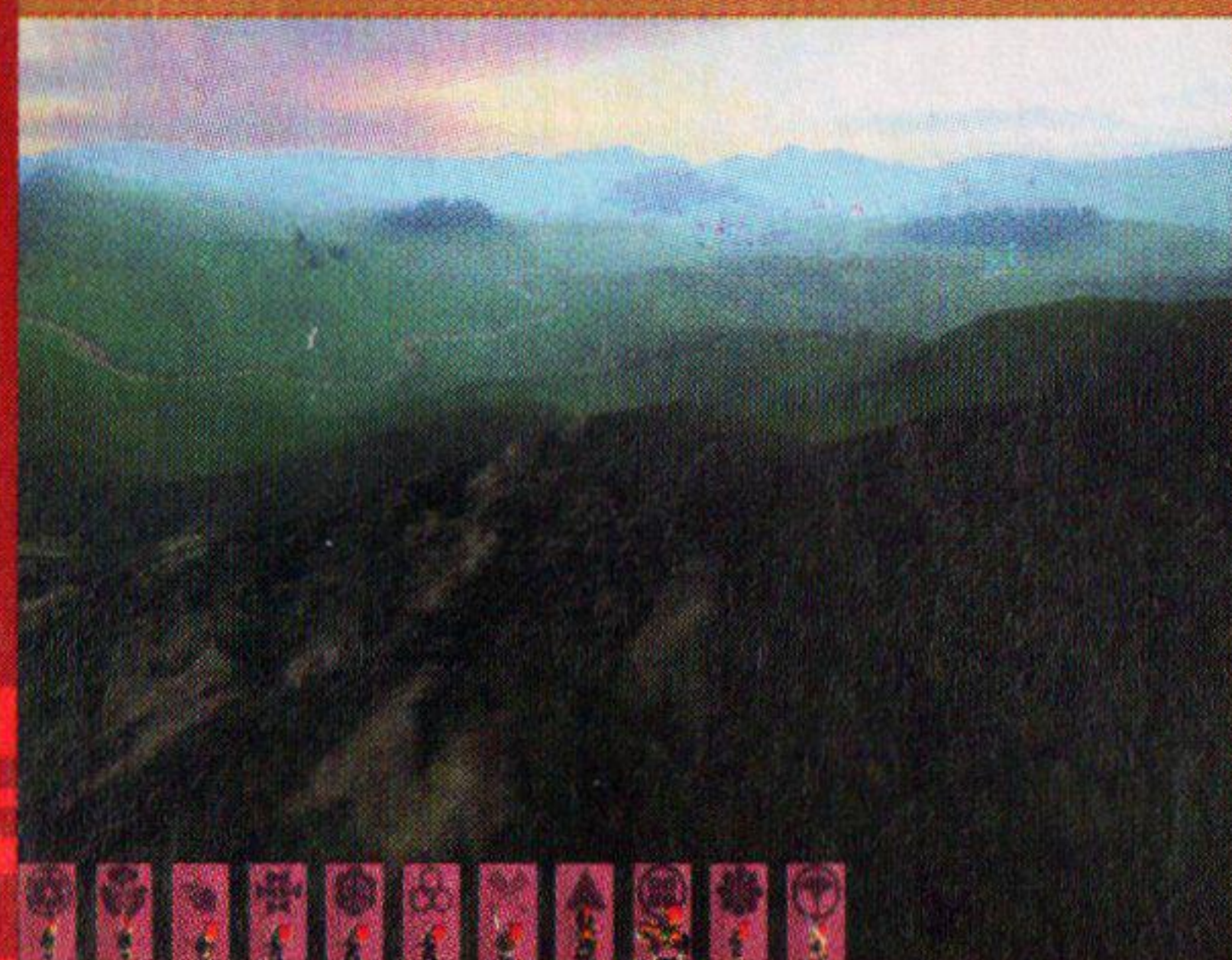
TC: Did you find that the Samurai period in Japan was a particularly good source of material for a game of this type?

MDP: To be honest, this is something that's coming up now that we're trying to think of what to do subsequent to *Shogun*. We're trying to look for other eras of history that are as cool and haven't been done to death, and it's actually really hard.

That age in the history of Japan was fantastic stuff for

a game, because you start off with lots of relatively evenly matched people, it's very militaristic, the whole country's at war, and it leads up to this kind of pinnacle with one guy controlling the whole country. It's a great background for a game. The whole thing with the Samurai, with their armour, with the whole Bushido thing, the Way of the Warrior – it's surprising really that it hasn't been done more. To find something that cool that hasn't been done to death is just fantastic.

It's one of those things, you know? Myself, I didn't have any big history of being into the Samurai or knowing about them, but the more I've read about it, the more I've learned in the context of doing the game, the more I've got into it as well. It's really fascinating stuff.



There are many different terrain types in *Shogun*. How well will your troops perform when you take them into the mountains, or onto the snow and ice of winter?

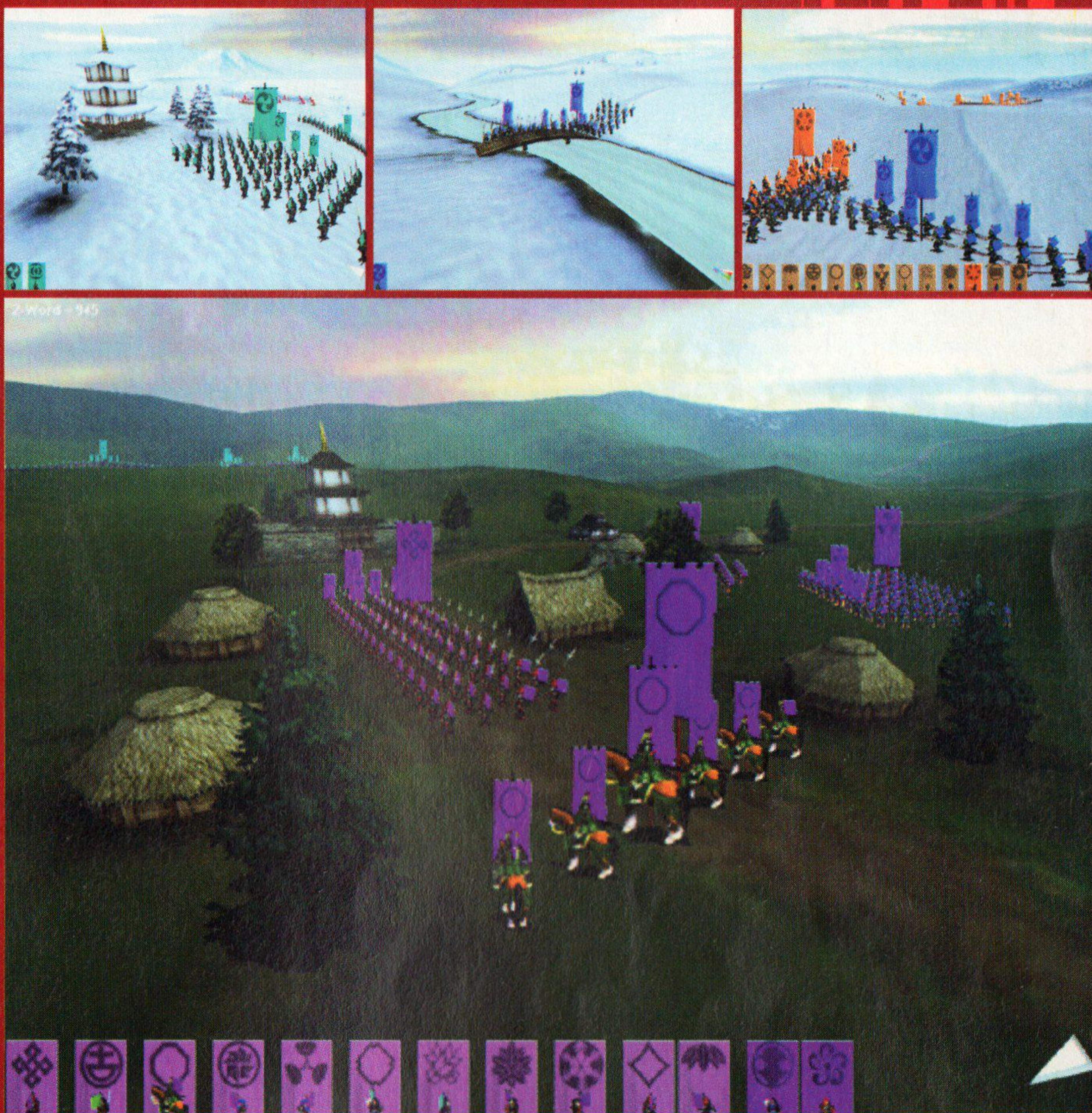
by people wishing to gain insights into organisation and strategy in both the military and big business. Built into the very core of the game, Sun Tzu's ancient wisdom makes *Shogun* the most accomplished wargame ever.

Ancient and modern

The AI programming is not restricted to combat, but is split into two levels – individual and squad. Troop movement is handled superbly at squad level, with troop formations defined by a highly intuitive drag and drop interface. You simply select a unit, move a pointer to where you want your troops to form up, drag out the shape of the new disposition, then watch as your selected unit moves quickly into its new position, each soldier finding a place in the new formation. There are some pre-set moves, such as forming up in a wedge for cavalry charges, or spreading out to let a regiment of spearmen pass through a group of archers, and these are all chosen by a simple right-click menu. Actions such as crossing bridges or moving over broken or muddy ground or uphill are also handled realistically. Rather than trying to fit an entire regiment across a narrow bridge as a single unit, the formation breaks up and the men cross individually and quickly form up again on the other side. This not only avoids stupid mistakes, it also looks highly realistic on screen. Although the developers pointed out to me that the squad-level AI wasn't finished on the version that I saw, I couldn't see any problems with it.

The face of the enemy

Once your army is on the battlefield and you have ordered them into position to fight the enemy, you can take stock of the situation. The battlefields themselves are amazing – huge expanses of rolling countryside, craggy mountains or flat



The banners at the bottom of the screen select your troops and show you what they're up to

TC: I understand you have had a certain amount of expert help on the game's historical accuracy.

MDP: Yeah, we have a guy called Steven Turnbull. He's had a big hand right from the beginning. When we started, we bought maybe fifteen books about the Samurai, and he'd written ten of them. That was how we got onto him. The bulk of our reference materials had been done by him. He has a big focus, not just on the history, but on the whole of Samurai warfare in particular. We got in touch with him, and he actually answered the phone the first time as 'Samurai Man', so he's seriously into his Samurai warfare!

As I said, all our initial reference work came from him so he kind of influenced it right from the ground up, but then when we actually went and spoke to him he had

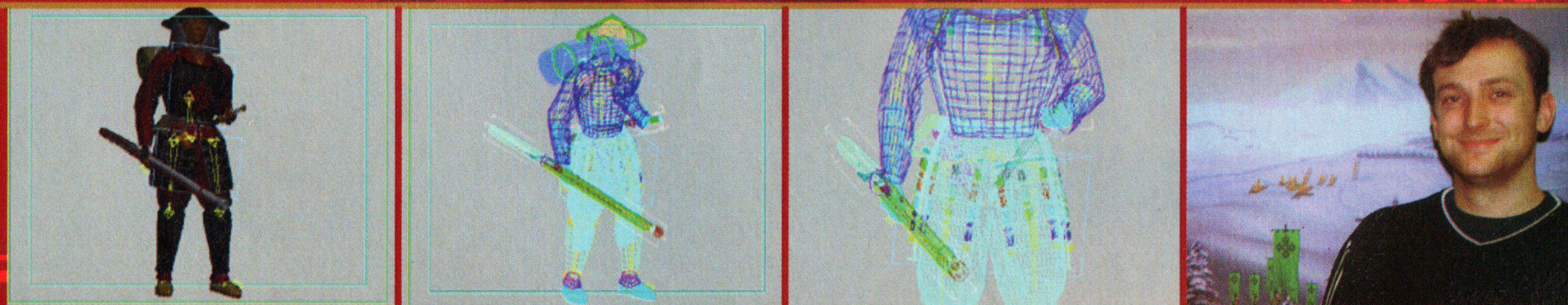
some really good ideas for the game as well, and it was all constructive. Everything he had was a constructive idea, in terms of how we could deploy castles in the game, how we could have fights around castles, how Ninja could be deployed on the battlefield, you know? Different formation types for all the units. So it's not really just the background, Steven's help will actually come through in the gameplay quite dramatically I think.

TC: So what historical periods have you considered for a possible sequel?

MDP: It's safe to say that the game engine lends itself to other time periods, but we don't want to get into that situation where we finish this game then decide what we do next, and then that's a little jump past this one, so you

end up with a sequel that's not much better than this one. The next thing that we come out with will be a significant step forwards. To do that we have to make sure we put enough time and resources into it, and we would have to start it pretty much now. To that end, we're definitely doing the Romans, because that would be awesomely cool as well. The legions, Carthage, elephants, Greek phalanxes – that's a great period for warfare as well. Once again it's a whole society that's just geared towards conquest, so that works well.

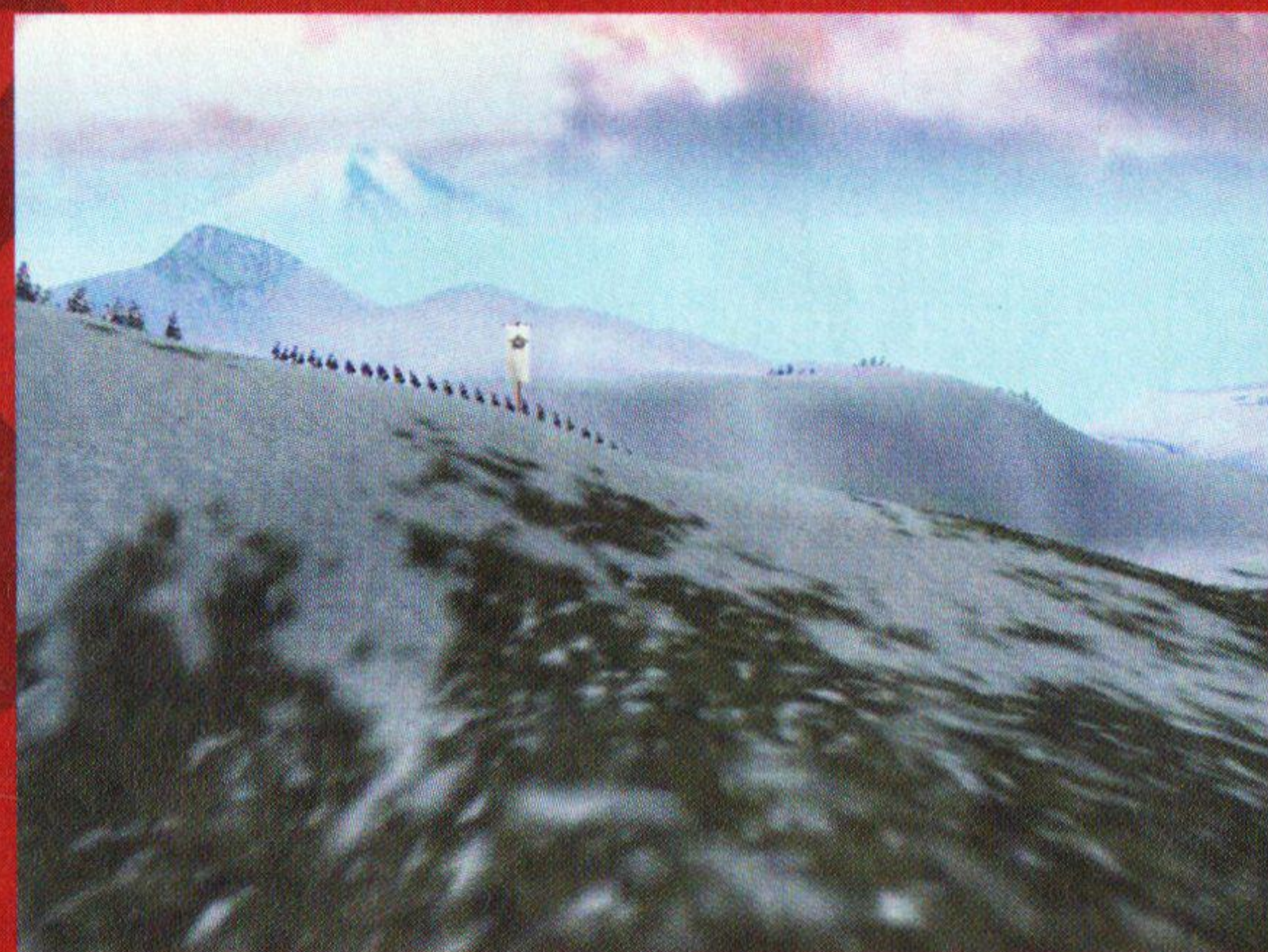
The other one we're looking at potentially is... There are only a couple of occasions when the Samurai really fought against other armies, and one of those was the Mongols. I can't remember whether it was Ghengis or Kublai, but one of the Khans invaded Japan at one point. That would be a good one for a possible update for *Shogun*.



The polygon models for the many cut scene animations are beautifully detailed, with realistic fabric textures and motion captured movement

THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Creative Assembly was formed in November 1987, and did most of their early work for Psygnosis, including titles such as *Stunt Car Racer PC* (the predecessor to *F1GP*), as well as versions of *Shadow of the Beast* and *Microcosm*. In 1993, the group started work for Electronic Arts, developing *FIFA International Soccer*, which was number one on the PC charts for several weeks and has been EA's best-selling multi-format title to date. Since then they have concentrated mainly on niche sports titles such as *Rugby World Cup 1995* and *Australian Rugby League (ARL96)*, written for EA's Australian office. Their most recent game was *AFL98 - Australian Rules Football*, which broke sales records in Australia.

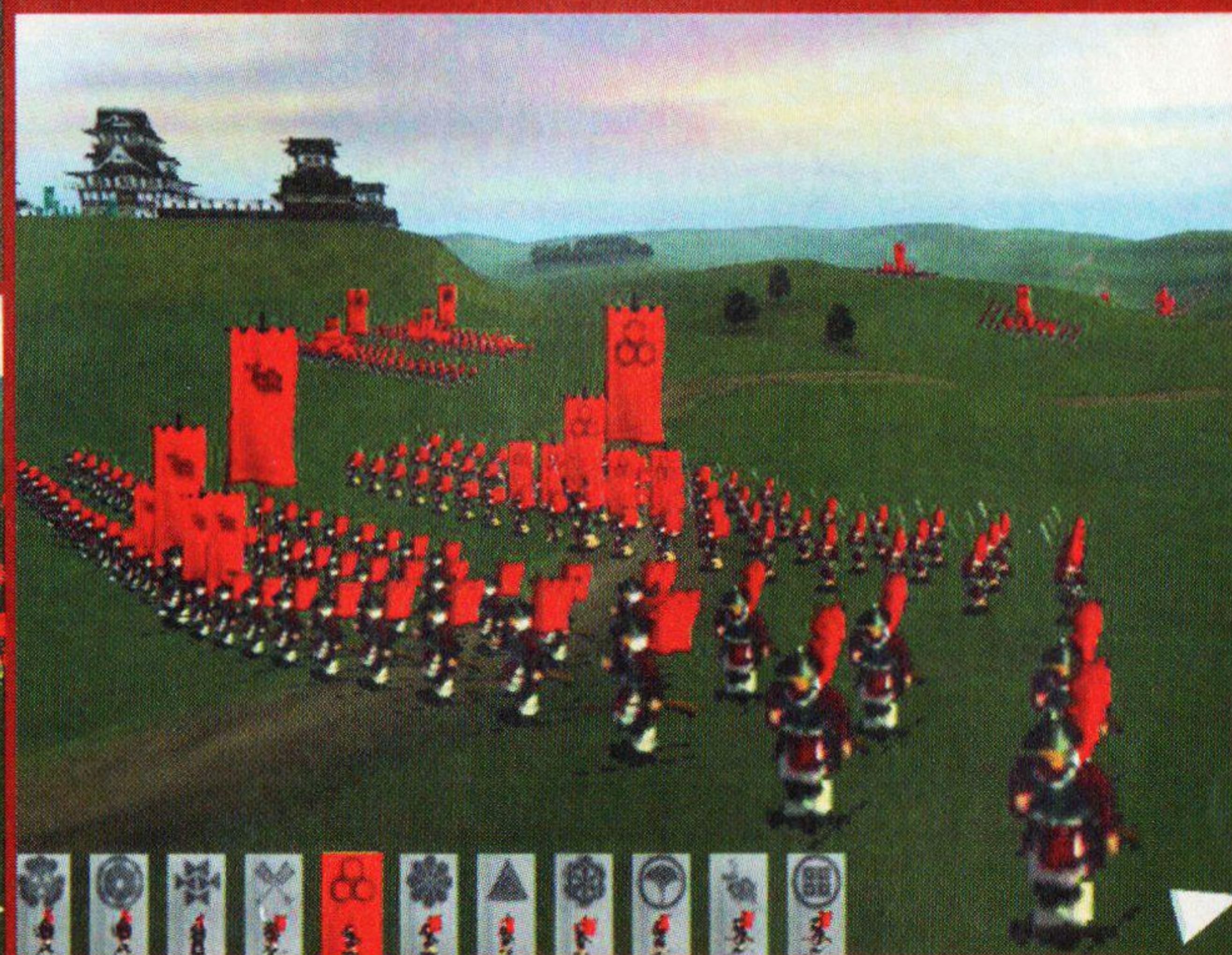
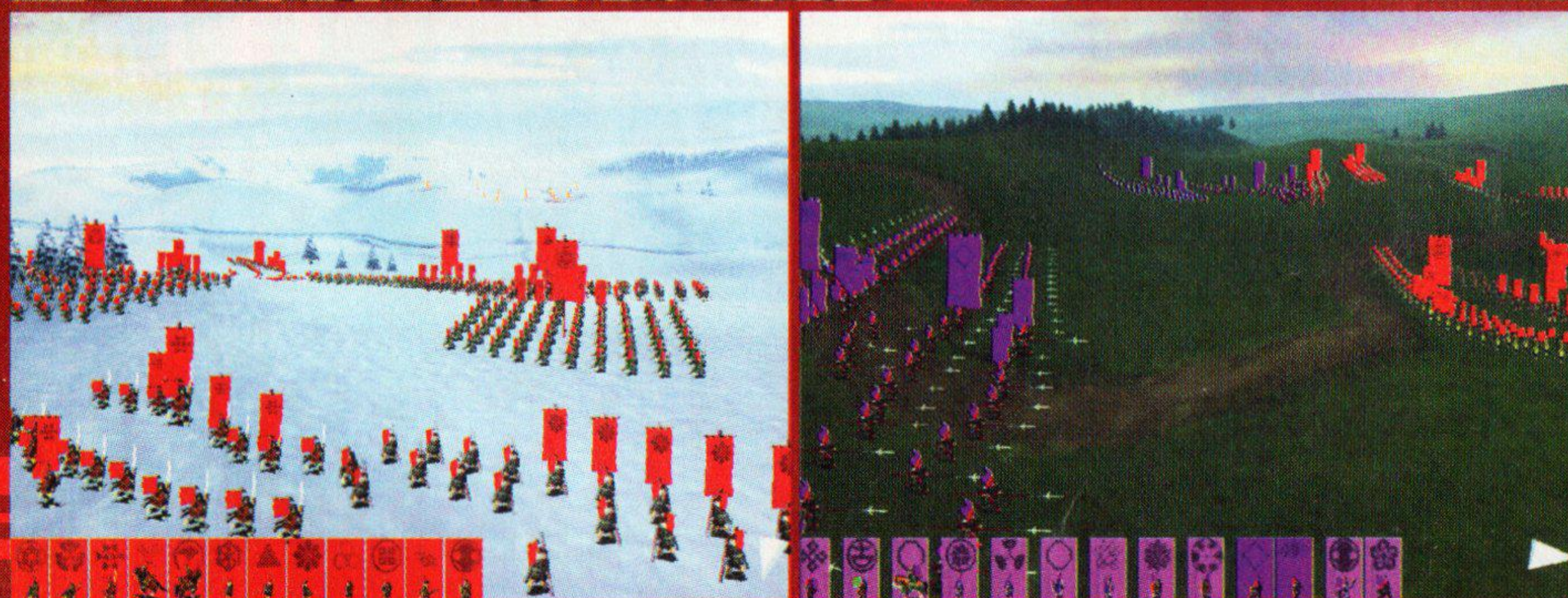


plains, rendered in amazing detail and clarity at screen resolutions which are capable of exceeding the most advanced graphics cards and monitors. Buildings such as houses, farms and castles are rendered in full 3D with detailed texture maps. There is not a trace of pop-up and the horizons are far away. The land is viewed from a movable camera viewpoint, which is completely free roaming within the field of view of your forces. If the enemy have formed up on the other side of a hill, you will have to position scouts to check out their strength. If you have a 3D accelerator card, the camera view swoops around like it was attached to a bird. Without the accelerator, the camera is still movable but goes directly from point to point. The angle of view can also be altered and zoomed, so you can look down on your troops or scan the panorama of the entire battlefield.

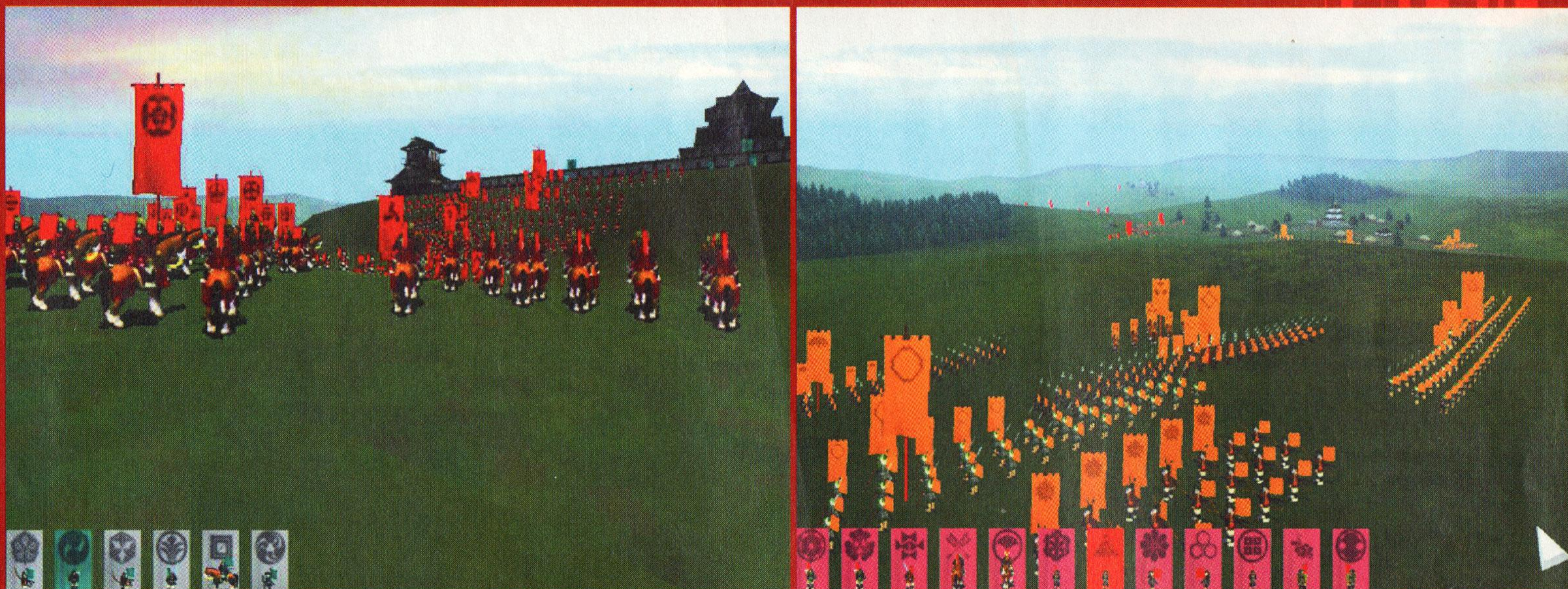
The designers are building in visual cues to help you keep track of the frantic action once battle commences. One of the best is the use of banners to indicate the morale of the troops. Each unit has a banner to identify it, and as long as they are doing well, the banner will be held proudly aloft. If the unit starts taking heavy casualties and their morale begins to falter, the banner will droop. Since you select a unit by clicking on their banner, you will instantly be able to tell which troops need help and where your enemy's strong points are.

Strategic thinking

Despite the sophistication of the battlefield system, there is more than one layer to the game. *Shogun* is also a game of strategy, and on this level as well, it is replete with detail. As Daimyo (feudal warlord) of a small province of Japan, you will seek to increase your political and military power by spying,



Your troops are identified by their banners, as are individual heroes. You can order regiments into different formations by simply dragging your mouse on the screen



assassination and diplomacy, as well as having the biggest and best-trained army. You will have to contend with earthquakes, alliances, fake peace treaties and production problems and still survive long enough to produce an heir to carry on the all-important family line. Your province provides you with a certain level of income, which you can use to purchase facilities such as castles, Ninja houses, training Dojos for spearmen or horsemen, and teahouses for training Geisha spies. The strategy level of the game is played out on a map of Japan showing all the provinces in relation to one another. Once you have built up sufficient strength, you can go to war with your neighbours in an effort to take over their province as well.

In addition to the technological advances made possible by building more facilities, you can learn from the barbarians. The historical period in which the game is set encompasses the arrival of the first Europeans – Portuguese traders and missionaries who landed in 1542. The Jesuit priests sought to convert the Japanese to Christianity, but brought with them European technology, including guns and ships. Even in the 16th Century, the Japanese had a knack for taking foreign technology and improving upon it, and before long the Samurai regiments were using muskets alongside their traditional weapons. You can do the same, making deals with the Europeans in exchange for firearms.

The art of war

Shogun is designed to be a superb single-player game, combining complex and involving political and military strategy with the frantic action of real-time battlefield tactics. The campaign game takes place over forty highly detailed regional maps, plus twenty castle maps, all of which can appear in any of four seasonal variations. This gives the game a huge scope and should ensure a lasting challenge to even the most dedicated wargamer, as well as the more general gamer.

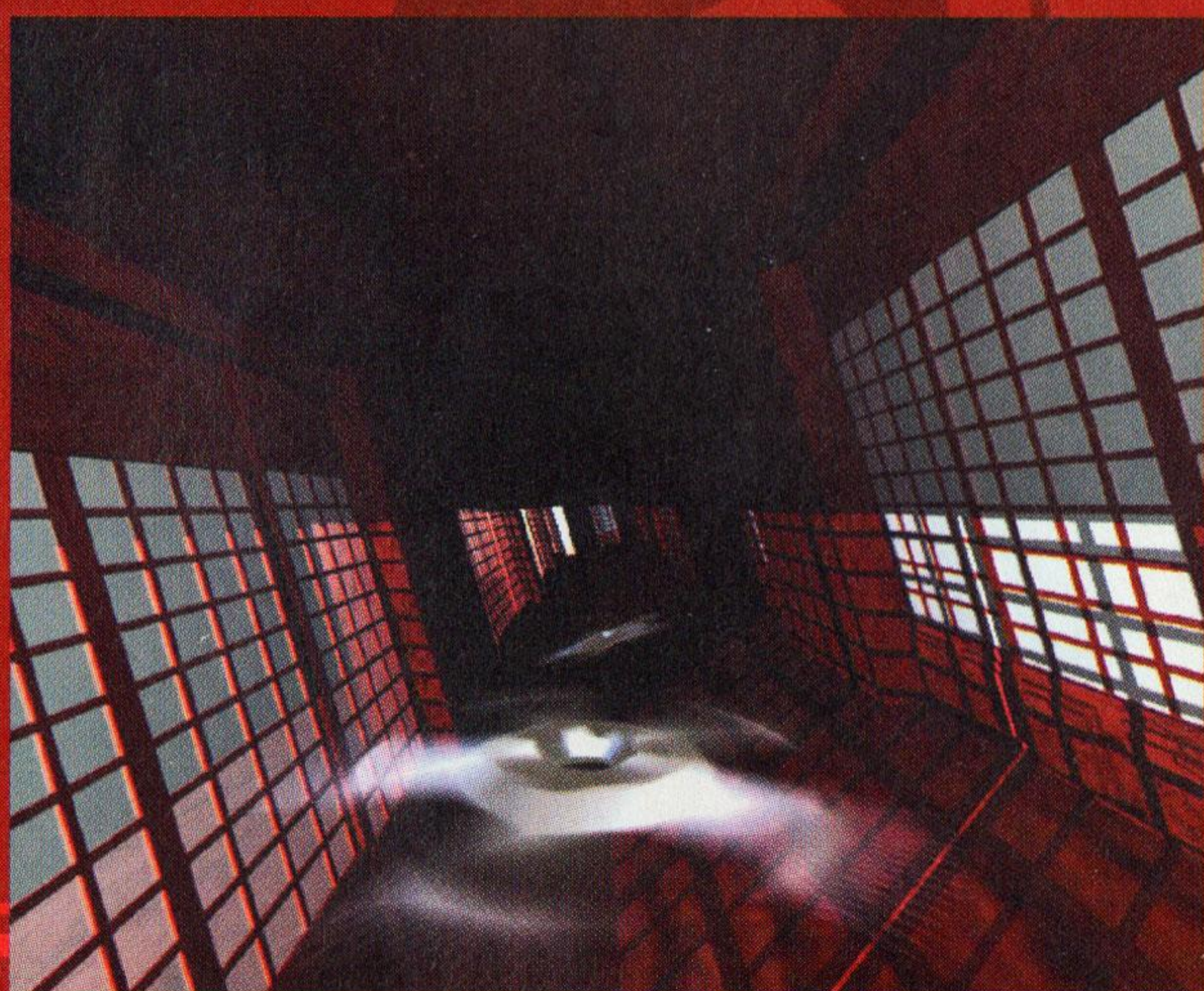
If you are more of a strategist than a tactician, you can just play the political game without resorting to the battlefield. Alternatively you can just play the campaign battles without the strategy level, leaving the development of your province to the computer. These options are mirrored in the multiplayer game. *Shogun* can be played over a network or the Internet in a number of ways, including a full campaign mode which could take weeks to complete. Other multiplayer options include the strategy part of the game only, or just fighting set-piece battle scenarios. The single player options will also include a 'quick action' feature which will allow you to jump straight into a battle.

Shogun is due for release in May next year, and we will be following the development of this extraordinary game with interest. **TC**

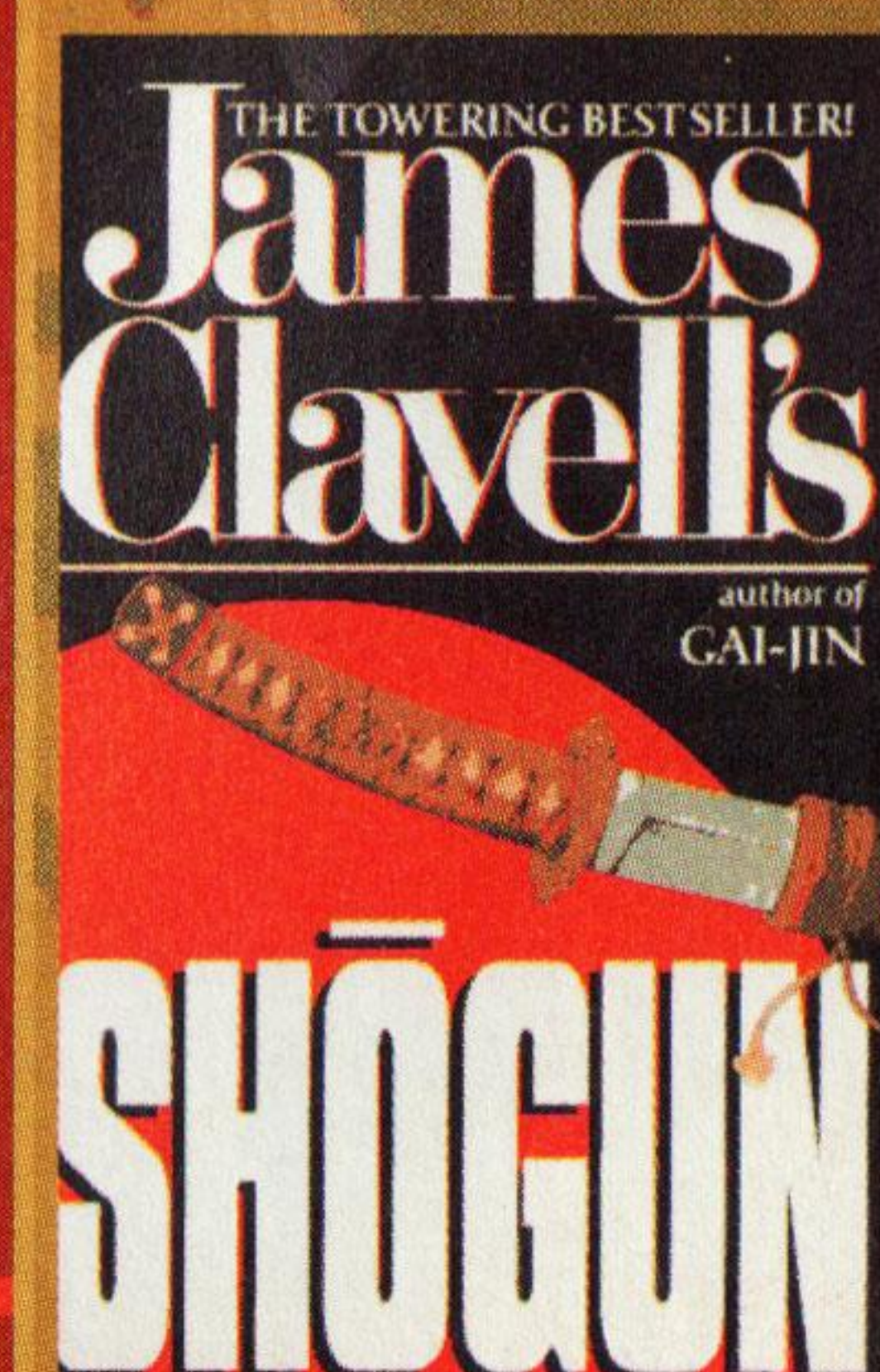
THE OTHER SHOGUN

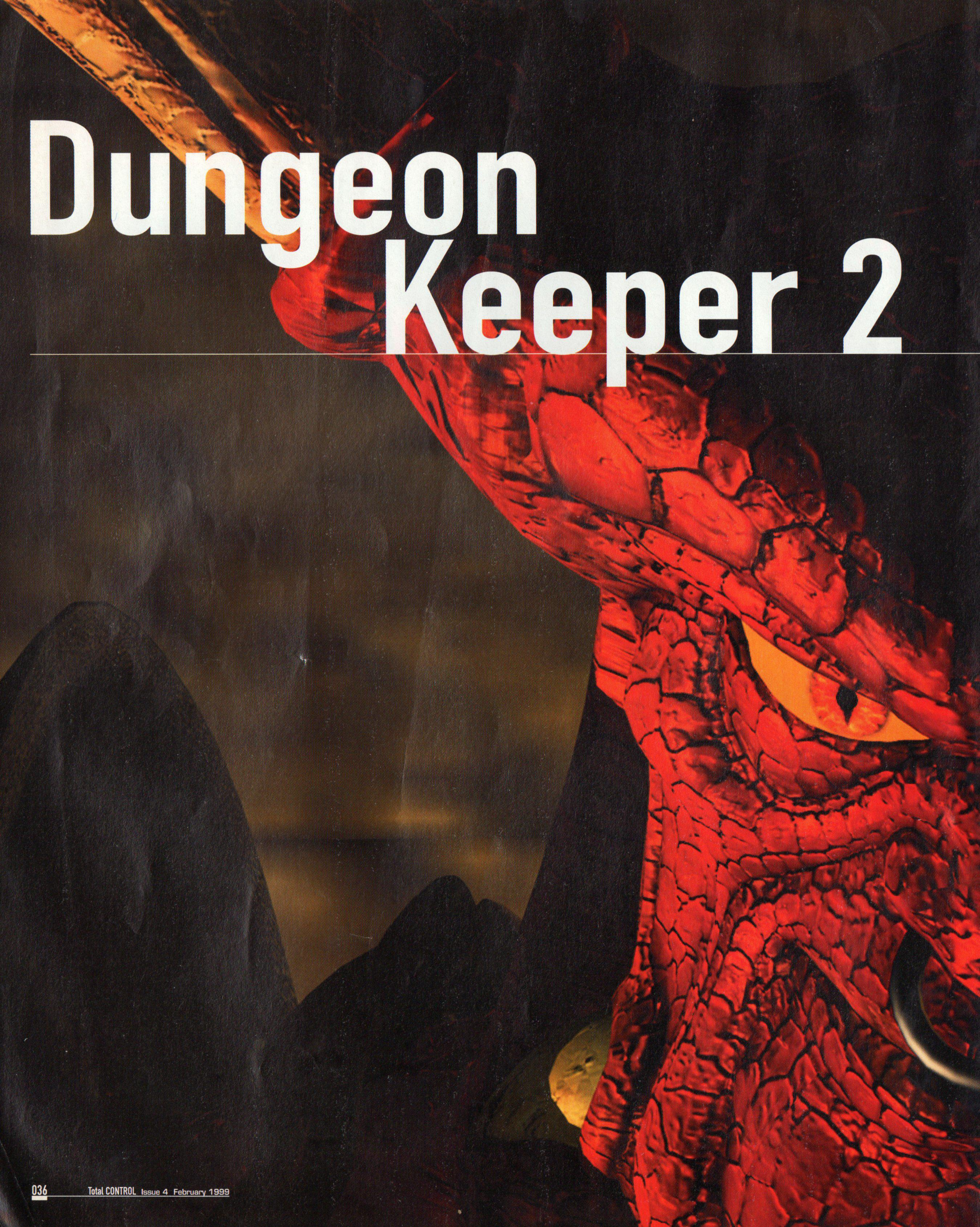
The designers of the game, The Creative Assembly, were quick to rebut any suggestion that *Shogun* was in any way based on the novel of the same name by James Clavell. *Shogun*, the game, covers an historical period from 1450 to 1600 AD, covering the rise of the Daimyos and their Samurai, and the eventual emergence of the Shogun.

The novel, and the award winning TV series adapted from it, only deals with the very end of this period and the political machinations which took place between the Japanese and the Jesuit missionaries who were attempting to convert the country to Christianity, mostly to further enhance their own political power. It follows the adventures of John Blackthorne, a shipwrecked English navigator who learns Japanese and becomes a Samurai.



The cut scenes are simple but dramatic, like Japanese Noh theatre. They capture the atmosphere of the game perfectly





Dungeon Keeper 2

In life you sometimes need to be **cruel to be kind**, but in *Dungeon Keeper* you're cruel just for the **hell of it**. Bullfrog's classic real-time strategy hybrid is just about **due for a sequel**, and when you consider the **improvements** they've made in many of their **previous sequels**, there's sure to be a lot to **look forward to this summer**.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER	Bullfrog
STYLE	Real-Time Strategy
PLAYERS	1-20

In the ever-growing software industry, the marketing of triple-A titles is becoming an increasingly competitive and risky business. But with big budget advertising campaigns appearing more and more frequently and steadily becoming more mainstream, it would seem that many of today's biggest games are being sold on the basis of hype – something that is often generated through good graphics and presentation. However, every now and again a piece of software is developed that is so original and innovative in its nature that it stands out from the rest of the market and catches even the most doubting of eyes. *Dungeon Keeper* was one such title.

Released during summer '97, Bullfrog created a game that sold for all the right reasons, and despite its few minor faults it became a member of an exclusive group of justified successes. Perhaps it was not so surprising, though, as many of the titles from the same software company also share

a place in the same group. *Populous*, *Syndicate*, *Theme Park* and their successors all share a common streak of originality, and each will be long remembered in the industry. *Dungeon Keeper* itself was a brilliant mix of their previous successes. It had the building and R&D aspects of *Theme Park*, the isometric viewpoint and character development from *Syndicate* and *Syndicate Wars*, and the concept of mana and god-like control system from *Populous*. It also drew inspiration from many other classic games as diverse as *Doom* and *C&C*. In short, it was a patchwork quilt of sorts, containing a bit of something for everyone.

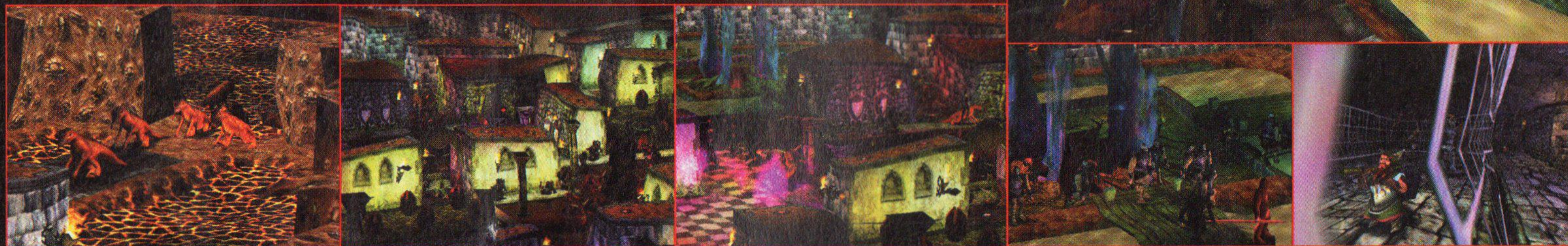
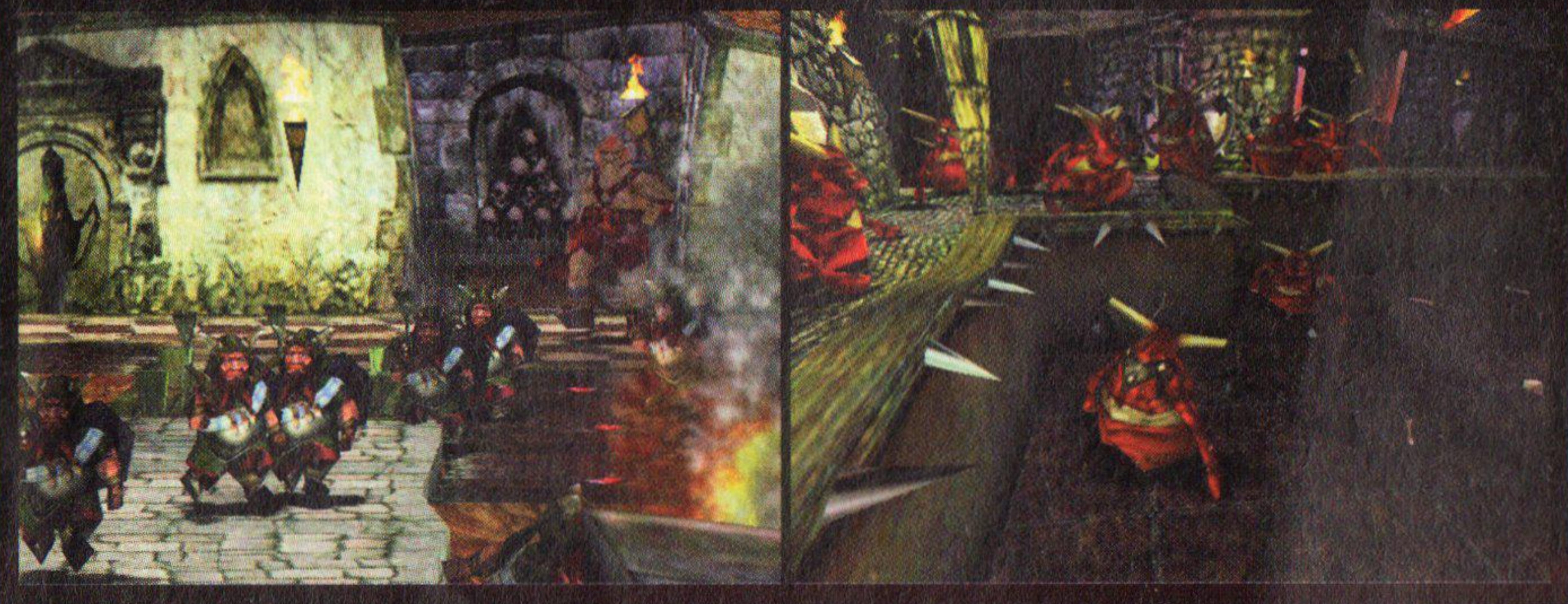
Bad guys have more fun

The sequel to *Dungeon Keeper* may not herald the same level of anticipation as the first game – for all intents and purposes it is pretty much what you might expect from a sequel – but, unlike films, sequels to

IT'S ALL AROUND THE WORLD

This time around, Bullfrog are planning on making a much bigger deal out of the multiplayer mode. It will have 16 player support on Bullfrog's own battle server, with a host of game options available to the player. The game comes complete with 20 multiplayer specific levels, and there are already plans to release a level editor at a later date.

One of the more interesting modes is the deathmatch option. Essentially a *Quake II* clone, it forces players to use only the first-person mode. Admittedly (and based on the success of this mode in the first game) it may not take over from your *Half-Life* sessions, but Bullfrog have promised that this feature has undergone a lot of work and should work much better in the sequel. There will also be an official site offering free patches and downloads for new creatures, levels, spells and traps that will be set up shortly after the game is released.



Compared to the first game, the graphical differences are quite spectacular – each screen is packed full of detail. Hopefully the gameplay won't become as complicated

computer games are far more likely to better their predecessors, and in our opinion it's certainly looking like *Dungeon Keeper 2* will live up to all expectations.

As in the first game, you once again take on the form of evil, using your power to shape and mould your dungeon into a factory designed to produce a multitude of the most twisted and deadly creatures, with the ultimate purpose of destroying all things beautiful and good. It's almost like playing a *Quake* clone, but this time from the other side. Heroes will enter your dungeon through portals (now resembling a gateway to earth)

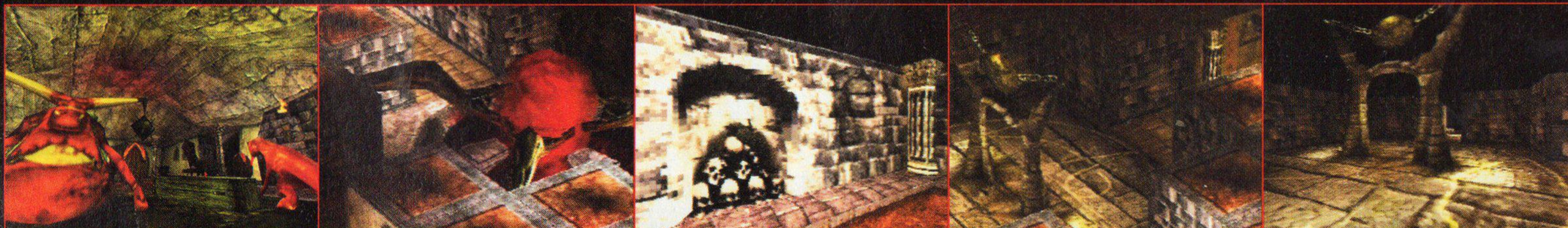
Temporary alliances can be made to thwart the heroes, but ultimately they too must be taken out of the picture for you to succeed. Being evil has its perks, and treachery and back stabbing will work to your advantage far more often than generosity. Bullfrog have emphasised the evil nature of the game far more in the sequel, and the strong sense of humour remains, but has been darkened up significantly. Another element of the first game that has been expanded upon is the role of the Horned Reaper, making his bid to become the next computer game personality. While he is still the most temperamental and

IT CAN BE VERY EASY TO OVER-STRETCH YOUR RESOURCES, BUT THIS OFTEN LEAVES A POORLY DEFENDED AND WEAK DUNGEON. IT'S ALL A QUESTION OF BALANCE, AND THIS IDEA HAS BEEN SHARPENED EVEN MORE

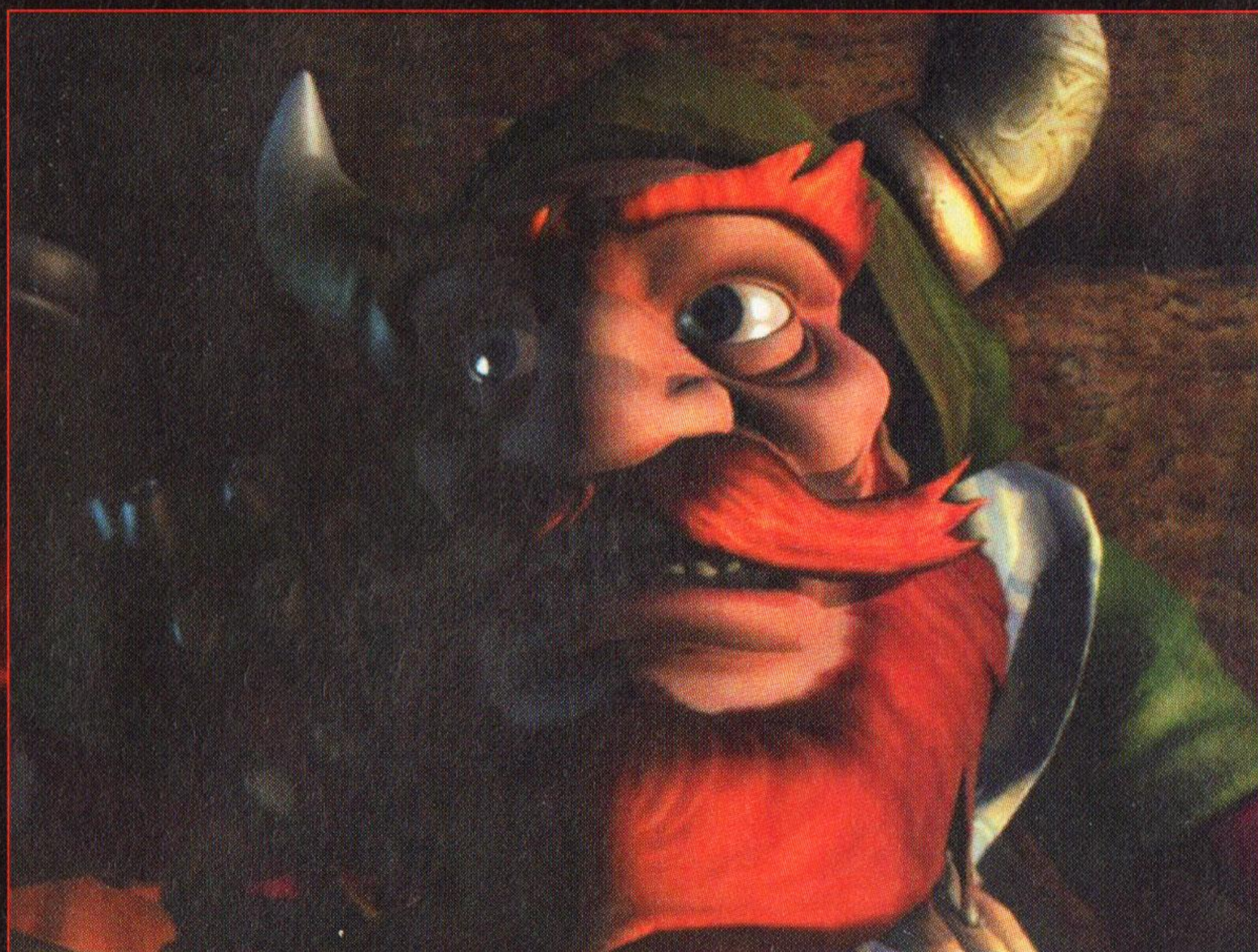
in an attempt to destroy you – sometimes once at a time, other times in huge groups. Each hero will often be far superior to your own creatures, so instead of using brute strength you must use the advantage of numbers in your attacks, as well as cunning strategies and traps.

While expanding your dungeon you may also come across other dungeons ruled by opposing keepers like yourself.

powerful of your creatures, a lot of work has been put into his character, and the new plot has you teaming up with the fearsome beast, using him directly to control many aspects of the game. In fact the whole level system in the sequel has been completely restructured. The linear path to success has been replaced by a series of campaign missions set over 22 huge levels – there will be many different routes through the game



The torturing aspect from the first game has also been improved – because of the polygon models, you'll now be able to distribute the pain around the creature's limbs



The new cut scenes look spectacular and appear after each level. Because of the enhancement of the Horned Reaper's character, he'll now be taking on a much bigger role

and the levels have been designed accordingly. Instead of merely taking over your own realm, you now find yourself searching for an ancient mechanism that will allow you to lead your army through to earth and battle good on its home ground. The mission structure is similar to the previous game, but the occasionally repetitive 'destroy all enemies' objective of the first game has been adapted so that you will often have a variety of more specific tasks to accomplish. These could be anything from rescue missions through enemy territory to hunting down fleeing heroes before they escape back to earth.

Heart attack

The dungeon heart in the first game represented your life-force. Its size increased as your dungeon grew stronger, thus giving you more power. If it was attacked it shrank until it (and consequently you) eventually died. The dungeon heart was originally situated in the middle of your dungeon in the room that you began each mission from, but now it is no longer stationary and can crawl around the level until it decides to rest somewhere, making it far more difficult to defend. You also start the game with a small number of Imps who are just as important as they were in the first *Dungeon Keeper*. The Imps are the workhorses of your dungeon. They are used to dig out tunnels and rooms that you

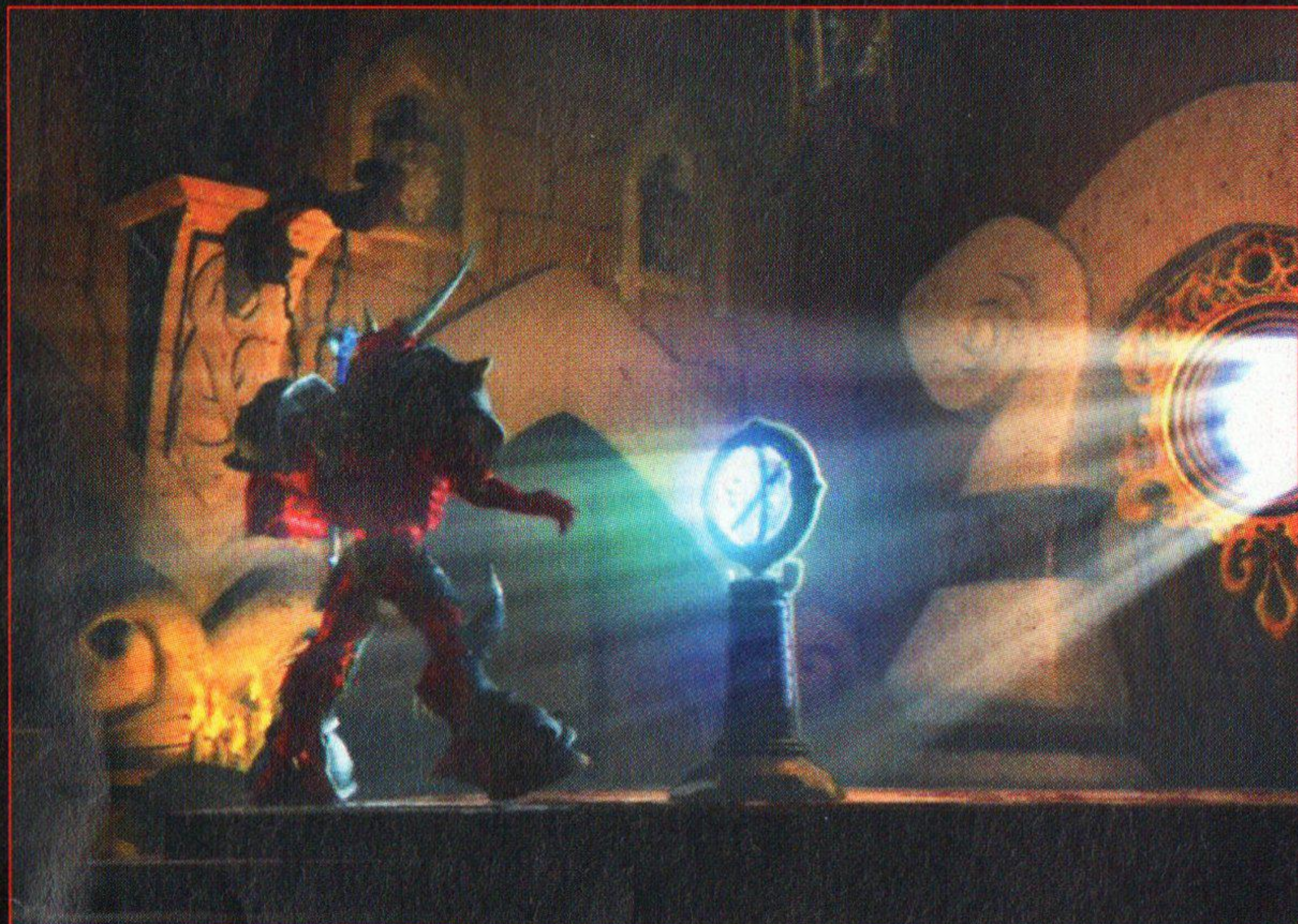
select, mine gold and return it to the treasury, place floor tiles to claim ground and also to build reinforced walls around your dungeon. Unlike before, your reinforced walls will not be impenetrable and can be broken down in time, so you will never be completely safe from your enemies – they will now also deteriorate in time and will require constant renovation. It was the dungeon design element that many found to be the most fun in the first game, but it is perhaps also the most strategic part. It can be very easy to over-stretch your resources, building and expanding as quickly as possible, but this often leaves a poorly defended and weak dungeon. It's all a question of balance, and this idea has been sharpened even more for the sequel.

Floor it

After land has been claimed by your imps, you can place room tiles over the square. The many different rooms from the original are mostly intact, with only a few additions and departures. Each room has a different purpose, and for it to be fully exploited you will have to think carefully about its size, shape and position in the dungeon. Their initial use is purely to attract creatures to your dungeon, as they don't come on their own. By being the owner of the bigger and more impressive rooms, you can lure them over to your side of the fence. Provide them with



Playing the first game on your P90 at home you'd have been very impressed at the multiple lighting effects. Once again Bullfrog have no intention of letting the visuals slip



The screens above are taken from the game as it was nearly one year ago. As you can see, a lot has changed since then

adequate sleeping and eating rooms and they'll be happy enough, but in some cases it's not that simple. Some creatures have a distinct dislike for each other and will fight amongst themselves – often to the death. In instances such as these, arrangements for separate sleeping quarters should be made.

Each creature will usually have a certain use in a specific room around the dungeon: Warlocks will research new spells if you have a library; Trolls will build you traps once you have a workshop etc. Keep them in line and make sure they don't slack off too much by slapping them around a bit (you can now punch them as well) and production will be kept up. Maintaining discipline is another fine balance that needs to be mastered.

BULLFROG PROMISE SOME OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR BATTLE MAGIC EVER SEEN - THE TRAPS AND DOORS HAVE NOW BECOME A FEAST OF VARIED AND DIVERSE PYROTECHNICS AND SPECIAL EFFECTS

When a dungeon looks to be taking shape and your library's workshops are up and running, you will be able to add some of the finer details to your dungeon, namely traps and doors. There are now many more of both in *Dungeon Keeper 2*, and a lot more has been made of the traps in particular, which now fall into two separate categories: magical and mechanical. Doors can no longer be created in a workshop and instantly thrown onto the map. They now need to be put together at their chosen location, which often leaves the creatures building it in a vulnerable situation until the devices have been fitted. Doors now look much more technically impressive, with huge rolling slabs of stone emerging from the sides of the walls and portcullises that slam down from the ceiling causing damage to foolhardy enemies. Considering the variety of commands at your disposal, the control system from the first game was very successful, but the GUI (Graphic User Interface) has been altered anyway, and now includes a favourite bar where you can drag your most frequently used commands.

As in *Populous*, you have no direct control over your minions, but you are able to direct them around the level by

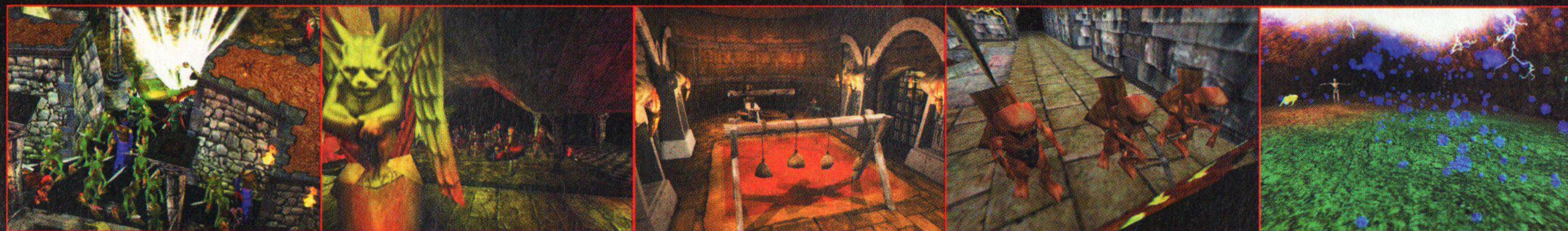
picking them up and dropping them on your claimed squares on the map, and they react depending on the situation they find themselves in. For example, dropping an aggressive creature near an enemy will usually lead to a fight.

Combat in the original was criticised for being a little bit too random, with your hordes of enemies all being thrown onto the nearest available space and left to battle it out. But now they all occupy their own physical space, so that no two creatures can stand in the same place. When you are preparing for a fight, you need to think about the unique abilities of your creatures far more carefully, deploying poorly armoured creatures with long-range weapons near to the enemy and your stronger, slower creatures at the back will obviously prove

ineffective. As before, creatures will gain experience from fights, and with this they can also gain new spells, skills and/or weapons – this must also be taken into consideration in the heat of a battle.

Although not fully realised before, the first-person mode from the original game will now prove to be far more important to your success or otherwise. During the game you can gain control over any one creature by possessing it. The game then switches from the isometric view to a first-person view through that creature's eyes. The player can then move around the dungeon and use any of the abilities, weapons or spells associated with that creature. It is only in this mode that you can have complete control over your creature's actions, using him to spearhead specific attacks etc.

The AI in general is very good though; the other creatures all have minds of their own and will carefully weigh up the pros and cons of each decision – you won't be able to throw a feeble half-dead Goblin into the heat of a battle and not expect him to run for his life. Similarly, if a healthy aggressive creature wants



Each creature now has a true physical presence in the dungeon, which will often prove to be a hindrance, but can also be made to work to your advantage

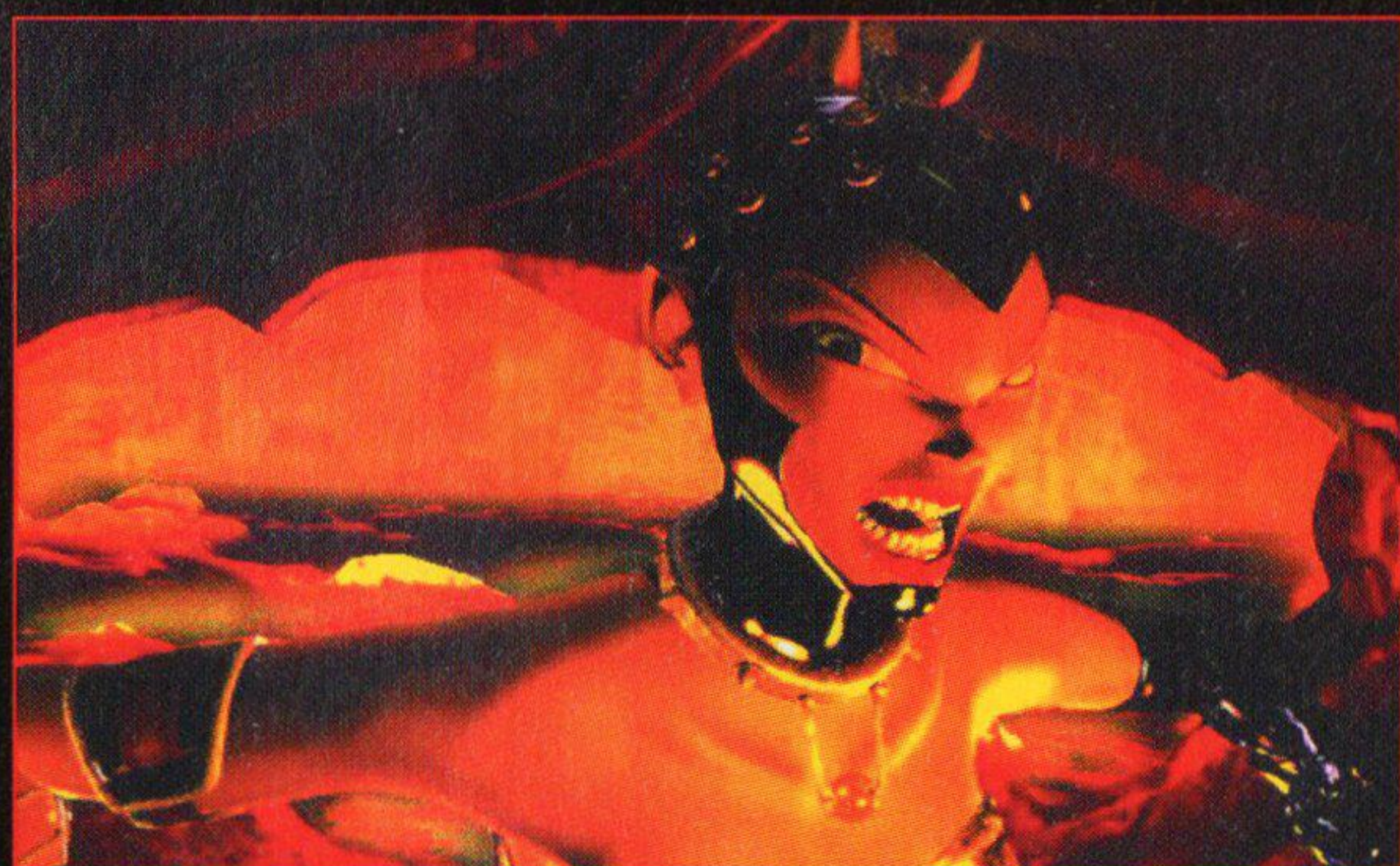


a fight, he may not wait for you to give him the opportunity. The game engine is also more advanced. Impressively, water now has a physical instead of a purely aesthetic purpose. It has its own motion and traction, meaning that the intelligent Keeper can use it to flood other areas, even using it as an emergency defence mechanism by flooding his own tunnels, effectively sweeping away everything in its path.

Troubled times

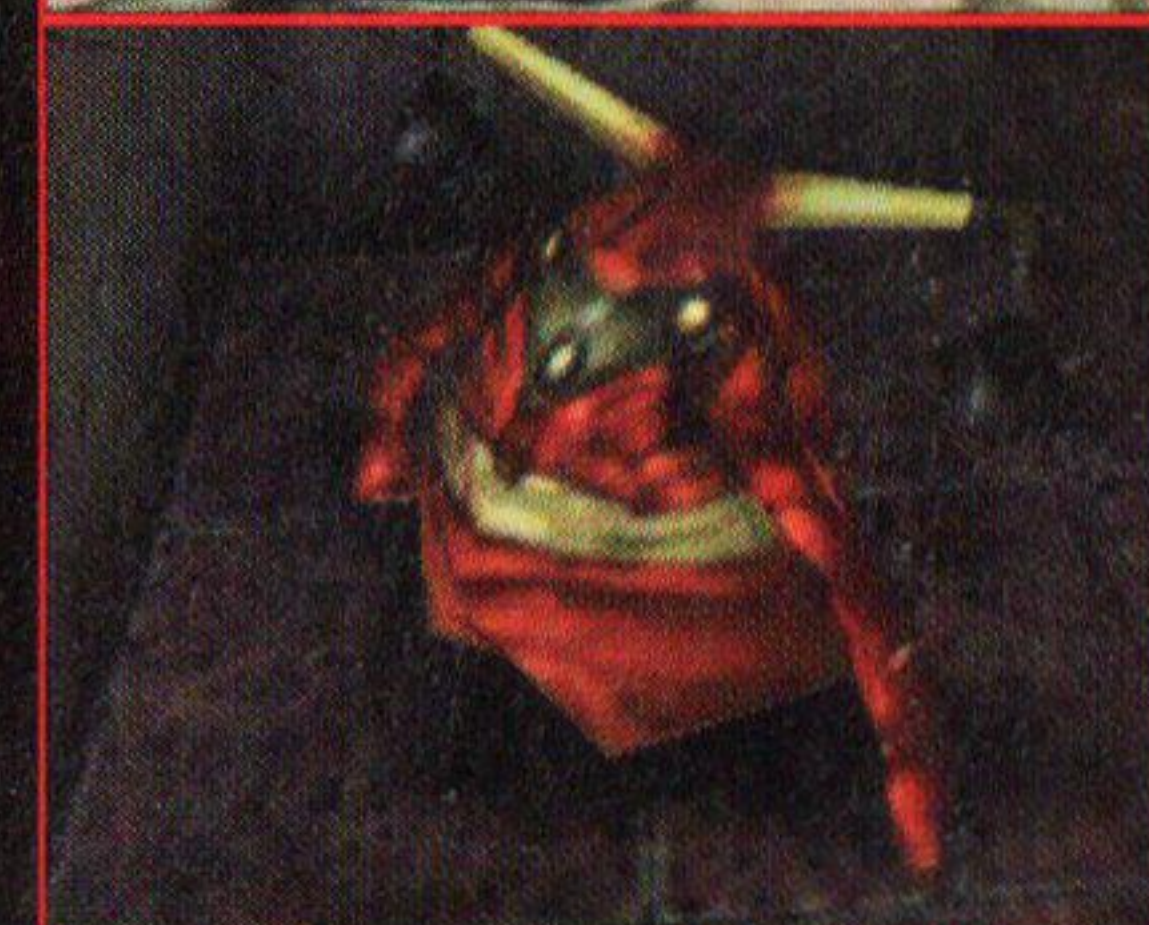
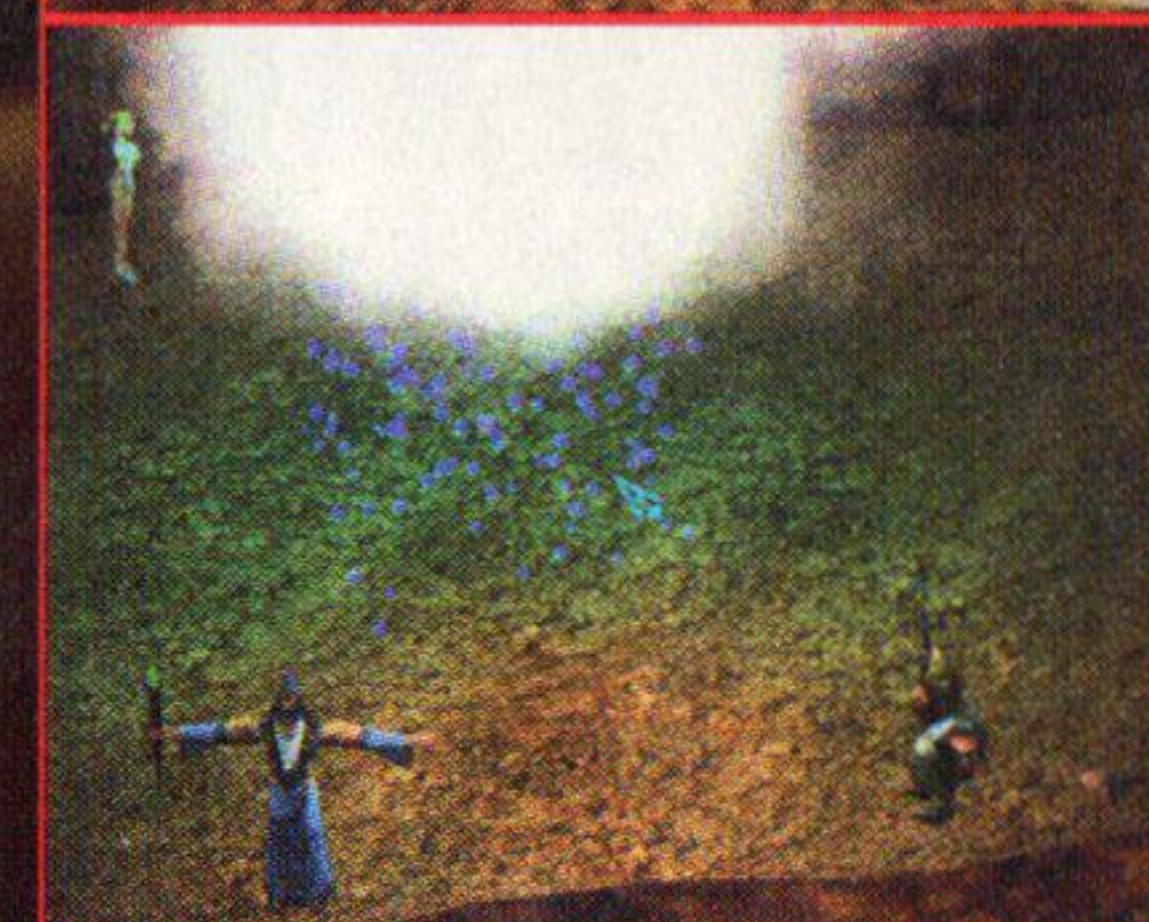
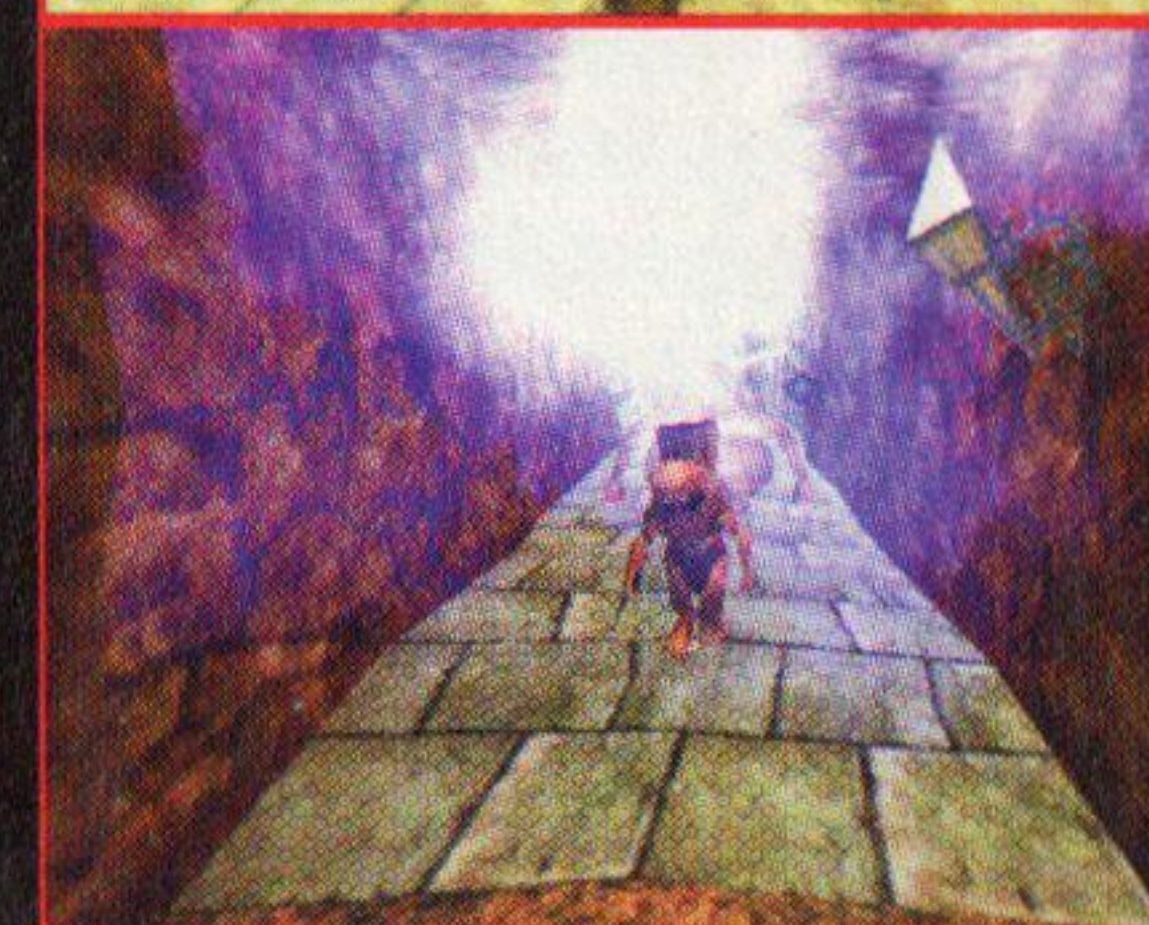
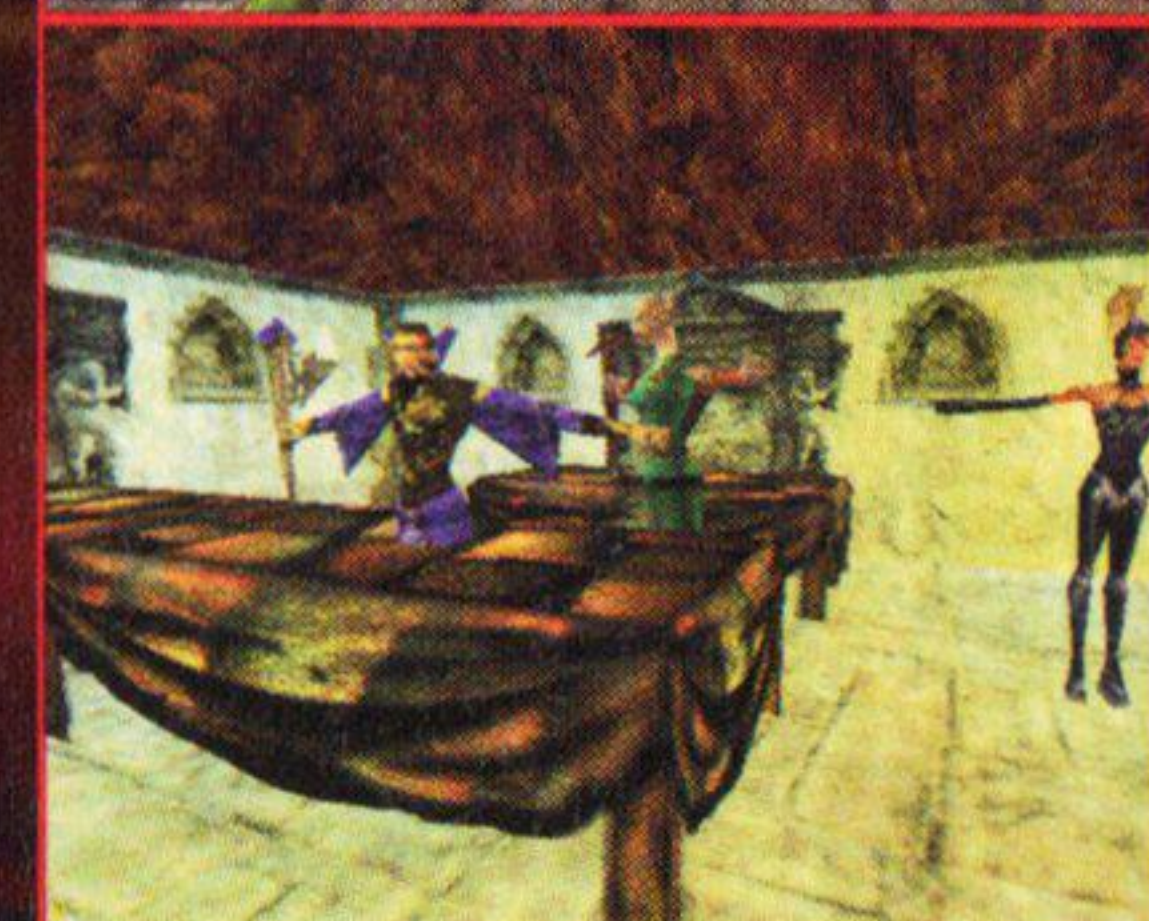
The original *Dungeon Keeper* has not aged well. The software graphics engine from the first game – though technically very impressive at the time – has not successfully endured the 3D accelerator revolution. Bullfrog have made every effort to make the sequel's graphics as impressive as the gameplay. The certainly look very nice indeed – the dungeon now looks similar to a sprawling underground city in scale, and all the detail from the first game has been vastly improved upon. Bullfrog promise some of the most spectacular battle magic ever seen. The traps and doors have now become a feast of varied and diverse pyrotechnics and special effects – those of you without 3D acceleration sadly won't be able to do it justice. Just as before, the game can be viewed from a variety of angles, but as well as a rotate option, pitch and roll options have also been included this time around. Lighting in the original was also very impressive, with some excellent shadow effects, and, as you would expect, the flickering multi-coloured light sources have been dramatically improved upon and several other effects such as water ripples have also been included. As if to add the icing onto the cake, the new plot of the game is now told through a series of about 20 fully rendered and very impressive cut scenes, some of which can already be found on the Internet.

There are many more improvements over the original that are yet to be confirmed, and while *Dungeon Keeper 2* may not represent a definite leap forward as far as the gameplay is concerned, this is certainly no mission pack – it's been improved just about as much as any fan of the original could want. Despite a number of setbacks, a release of June '99 looks highly likely, and we'll be looking forward to getting our hands on a late beta version in the coming months. **TC**



FACES OF EVIL

The diversity of the creatures in the original *Dungeon Keeper* was one of the biggest achievements, and it's not surprising that many of them will be making a return for the sequel. Among the more well-known faces are the Warlocks, Mistresses, Bile Demons, Vampires, Trolls, Flies, Skeletons and, of course, the Horned Reaper. The 16 new heroes and monsters have forced many of the others out, but the new faces sound very promising. The most powerful addition is the Dark Angel. Being nearly as tough as the Horned Reaper, he also has the ability of being able to re-animate any dead corpses that he passes. The Maidens of the Nest are half-human, half-spider and are perhaps the most menacing of all your creatures. The other new additions include the Dark Knight and Dark Elf – who both use a long-range crossbow – the Goblin, Rouge, Salamander and Rat. Although they each have their own agendas, they must all be made to serve you, because without them your dungeon would quickly be overturned by the forces of good.



Learning the strengths of your creatures is important

Control Yourself

LETTERS

Plenty of interesting letters this month, and **a great selection of responses** to last month's letter from Mark Coyne for us to choose from. **Keep them coming** and who knows? You could **win yourself some top Mad Catz peripherals!**

HARSH WORDS

I am writing this letter after reading Cliff's introduction in issue 2, where he states some publishers thought your scoring policy was too harsh. I would like to state that it is refreshing to come across a magazine with a realistic scoring profile.

As a 22-year-old with a large disposable income, I become quite agitated when I see magazines boosting a games profile in order to satisfy the publisher. I therefore feel your scoring system will save the pennies of many games players younger than myself and with less money to spend. I do hope you continue where you've started from and resist pressures from publishers.

I would finally just like to commend you for producing a magazine at a reasonable price, with a wealth of information, which doesn't just concentrate on the younger market. Good luck.

Darren Clare - Lincoln

Yours is one of a number of letters we've received on the subject of our scoring system, and I'm pleased to say that your positive comments are representative of those expressed by most of our readers. The majority of the games publishers have also responded quite well, although there are one or two who are now refusing to send us reviewable code of their products ahead of the release date. I guess that's the price we pay for being honest and trying to serve the interests of our readers rather than those of the companies we deal with.

MAD LETTER OF THE MONTH

FAQ MR. COYNE

Last month we printed a letter from Mark Coyne in which he stated, in no uncertain terms, that "Sony have done nothing for the gaming world as a whole". Guessing that one or two of you might disagree with this and some of his other comments, we invited you to comment.

And guess what? You did...

A TRUE GAMER?

Having just read Mr. Coyne's petulant little speech in the January edition's letters section, I thought I'd throw my two cents your way. Let's take Mr. Coyne's points one at a time.

Firstly, Mr. Coyne states that "Sony have done nothing for the gaming world as a whole". Apart from manufacturing a product which has given thousands of people worldwide a lot of pleasure and hours of fun, and has also, through its emerging ubiquity, gone a long way towards making the gaming industry get taken more seriously.

The PlayStation's 'cool' image is also dismissed as more empty marketing than any real indication of quality. Isn't

this the same type of cool image that Sega tried to manufacture with their MegaTV ads and Sonic merchandise?

We are also told rather arrogantly how a "true gamer" should be reacting to the industry at the moment. I'd like to thank Mr. Coyne for defining for the rest of us what a true gamer is - it will certainly save me the bother of coming up with my own opinions. (Insert patronising smile). It seems to me that Mark Coyne's attitude towards Sony is borne largely out of his disappointment with the way his console of choice has performed. People who bought Megadrives are urged to have faith in Sega to deliver. Should the people who bought the MegaCD and the 32X also retain their faith?

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SEGA?

Congratulations on being the first magazine I have found to cover all computers successfully, giving in-depth views, packing lots into an issue, and basically being an absolute joy to read. When I first saw your magazine I knew £1.50 would only be for the first issue, but a regular price of £2.50 is a bargain!

I am a dedicated PlayStation owner and think all things Sony are wonderful, but I have frequent (but friendly) arguments with friends who own a certain machine called 'Nintendo 64' about which console is king. Every now and then, however, during these 'discussions' I find myself thinking, 'Whatever happened to Sega?' as, since the Saturn bombed in Europe they seemed to have disappeared off the face of the Earth. But now, with the ever-closer launch of the Dreamcast, may I say 'Good Luck' to Sega and hope the Dreamcast sells by the bucketload - after all, they deserve it, and the Megadrive was a wonderful thing that helped me through my relatively young childhood.

Back to the PlayStation now, though, and would it be possible if you could tell me exactly what the Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) will do to benefit us PlayStation owners when it is out on the market, and what does it actually do? Is it a mini Game Boy, or is there more to it

than that? In issue two you said that 31 games are currently in development. I would be extremely grateful if you could answer this question, as I am desperately awaiting an answer. Also, do you know approximately how much it will cost?

Thank you for reading this letter and keep up the great work!

PS. Please print this letter as I have written to many magazines and they seem to think the views of a 15-year-old are not important. I know you are aimed at an older audience, but I think my points are adult enough to be included.

Mark Creese - Vale of Glamorgan

The PDA, or PocketStation as it is now known, is basically a memory card that incorporates an infra-red transmitter for exchanging data between units without the need for a PlayStation to be present. It also incorporates a small screen that can be used to play sub-games on, downloaded from games such as Street Fighter Zero 3, Final Fantasy VIII and Theme Aquarium. Don't hold your breath, though - the Japanese release date has slipped and a European release this year looks unlikely. As for the price, it'll be cheaper in Japan but we'd expect it to retail for around £25 - £30 in Europe.

Just because Sony have done rather better than Sega is not Sony's fault - it's called business, and if your product does not capture the imagination of the punters as well as your competitors, then you lose. Simple. Blaming Sony for all your woes is childish and laughable, although I can understand Marc's attitude - I'd be pissed off too if I was sat on a dusty old Saturn while all the exciting new releases on other formats were passing me by.

I hope Sega do well with Dreamcast. I have an import machine on order and I'm looking forward to seeing first-hand what it can do. I also own a Nintendo 64, SNES, PlayStation, Game Boy Color and a Voodoo2 powered Pentium 2. I do not, however, own a

Sega Saturn or a Megadrive.
Matt McQuillan - Via email

SUPERIOR GAMEPLAY

I would like to respond to Mark Coyne, who has a serious problem. First, there are more games which have superior gameplay on the PSX than on the Saturn, like *Final Fantasy VII*, all the *Racer* games, all the *Tekken* games, *Gran Turismo*, *Colin McRae Rally*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Soul Blade*, *Crash Bandicoot*, the *Resident Evil* games - do I need to go on? Mr. Coyne does point out that Sony don't produce any good games themselves, but Sony aren't a games company.

Mickel Daelmans - Via email

MAD FOR IT

From this month onwards, these pages will be sponsored by Mad Catz. Which as well as giving us an excuse to call our star letter award 'Mad letter of the month', means that each and every letter printed, excluding those in Choice Cuts, will win for its writer a Mad Catz joystick. One particularly mad letter each month will instead be awarded a Mad Catz steering wheel plus a choice of either a camera, a Walkman or a Mad Catz Wrist Rumbler.



Mad Catz Peripherals - By Any Means Necessary

NEXT MONTH

Now that we have some

prizes to give away, please don't forget to indicate your preferred format somewhere on your letter. You'll find that winning an N64 pad doesn't do you a lot of good if your only system is a PC. If you'd like to comment on this month's issue, raise some issues of your own, or if your name is Mark Coyne, please don't hesitate to write to us at the following address:
Control Yourself
Total CONTROL
Rapid Publishing
1 Roman Court
48 New North Road
Exeter EX4 4EP

LIVING IN DREAM MACHINE LAND

Before I start, I'd just like to get the butt-kissing part over with and say what a great magazine you've produced. It is refreshing to see a multi-format magazine that truly is multi-format, and at only 2.5 quid, you can't go wrong, so well done!

I am responding to a letter in TC issue No. 3, titled "Dream Machine", and written by a Mr. Mark Coyne. He called himself "a Sega man", which is fair enough, but I believe that his comments regarding other gaming formats, along with many other people's views, are completely unjustified. Your reply to the letter was to see if we could get some sort of debate going, but hopefully this letter will avoid such a debate by offering a fair, balanced view on the whole gaming scene.

Going back a few years, I was the proud owner of a Sega Megadrive and a Super Nintendo. The 16-bit era came to an end, and along came the Sega Saturn. It looked like a good machine, but I decided to wait in view of another contender on the horizon - the Sony PlayStation. I succumbed to the advertising might of Sony and purchased one of their beauties - and having read about the Saturn, I was glad I did. Not that I have got anything against Sega (they do after all produce some of the best arcade games), it's just that it was hard to program games on, and ultimately support for it was thin on the ground (plus it's nearly dead now). Then, suddenly the N64 was upon us, and I just had to have Nintendo's 64-bit offering.

You see, I take things for what they are, not what other people say or believe. In the 16-bit days, I think Nintendo had the edge in terms of software support, but both the Megadrive and Super Nintendo had their fair share of great games. To gain the best of both worlds, you had to own both. Then, along came the 32-bit systems, and for me, the Sony PlayStation was the best option, as it had great fighting games like *Tekken* and racing games like *Ridge Racer*. But, due to my open attitude to this area, I also purchased an N64 when it was launched. Why? Not only does it have

superb graphics, but it also has great platform games such as *Mario 64* and racing games like *Wave Race*. It also has the mighty *Goldeneye 007* first-person shooter. So, ignoring the recent launch of the Dreamcast in Japan, I believe the N64 has the best graphics of all the current consoles, but that does not mean to say I think it has the best games. Different consoles have different software support (Nintendo has a younger audience and Sony have captured the older audience. Hence the game content is bound to differ). Like I said before, to get the best of everything, you need to own at least two different consoles.

So there you have my views. I am getting fed up of people saying Sega are better than Nintendo and Sony, and all other permutations of the three. In reality, yes, one may be technically superior, but at the end of the day, it is the games that count, and each machine has its own fair share of crap games and excellent games. You should decide what game type you like and go for the console that delivers what's right for you. Don't just get the one that your mate says "cos' it's better than the rest". People who absolutely, firmly believe that their machine is the best are simply narrow-minded, obviously can't think much for themselves, and are ultimately missing out on some great gaming experiences.

Having said all of that, what about the Dreamcast? It sure looks good, and Sega appear to have done a superb job on it. Plus there's the imminent launch of the PlayStation 2!! And then, of course, Nintendo's next offering!! Then Sega's next beast, then Sony's PlayStation 3!! Then... oh, sod it - it's never-ending, this lark!! Anyhow, joking aside, the Dreamcast is one I will certainly be keeping my eyes on, but you can guarantee that it won't be the only console I own. Oh, and did I mention that I also have a nice souped-up PC for playing games on too? Now there's a whole different debate altogether!

Thanks for listening, and keep up the excellent work on the magazine.

Graham Potter - Hull

CHOICE CUTS

Receiving so many letters each month means that it's impossible for us to print all of them. Every month in this section we'll take quotes from letters that were too long or too late to be printed in their entirety and do our best to answer/ridicule them.

I used to own a PlayStation, but swapped it for a - shock - Sega Saturn.
James Griffiths - Worcester

Hardly something to brag about now, is it?

I read issue two and it was brilliant - probably, in my eyes, the best magazine out. And that's a hard title to win considering that you're up against magazines like N64 and Edge.
Ben Morter - Hastings

Who?

I can't decide between a Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, or the N64 CD.
John Paul Lucas - Wigan

What a dilemma - a console that's already out in Japan but won't be here for another nine months, another that won't see the light of day until the next millennium, and an add-on that to the best of our knowledge doesn't exist. My advice: don't worry about it - your Nintendo 64 still has plenty of life left in it.

Can we have cheats and tips at the back please?
Hollis Wong - Bideford

Okay, okay... enough of the letters asking for cheats. Next month we'll start printing cheats and tips for all of your favourite games. Just don't expect the twenty pages of space-filling crap you find in other games mags.

I think that Mark Coyne's letter in issue 3 hit the nail on the head about Sony's brainwashing techniques.
Anonymous - Via email

You're the only person who's admitted to that this month, although I notice that you forgot to include your name. You're not one of the Gunmen of the Apocalypse from the X-Files are you?

I want issue 1, and every newsagent I have been to has sold out. I just can't get hold of one, so being such splendid chaps, I was wondering if you'd kindly send me one please.
Paul Tickle - Bolton

Does your back issues page not work then? Or maybe you haven't been able to locate it. It's the one with 'Back Issues' written at the top.

Could I have Will Adkin, Cliff Smith, Nick Jones and Justin Calvert autograph something for my sister, Kirsty Poole? (She thinks they are hunks)
Silas Poole - Okehampton

Well, err... if you're sure that's what she said. You'll have received a signed... something by the time you read this.

Virtua Fighter 3 is far, far superior to Tekken 3. You forgot to mention the complete 3D environment that allows you to fight on staircases or submerged up to your knees in water.
Anonymous - Via email

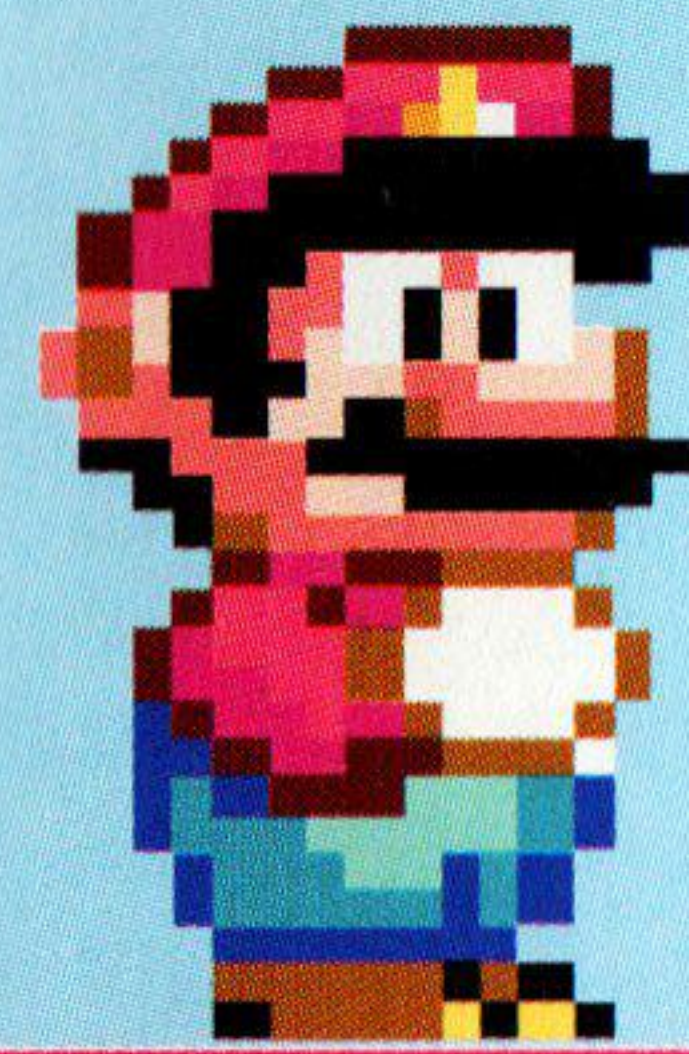
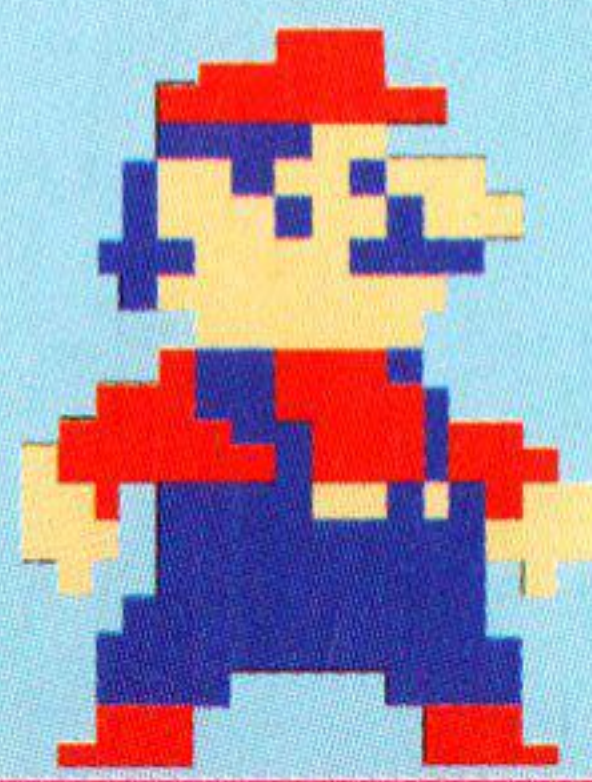
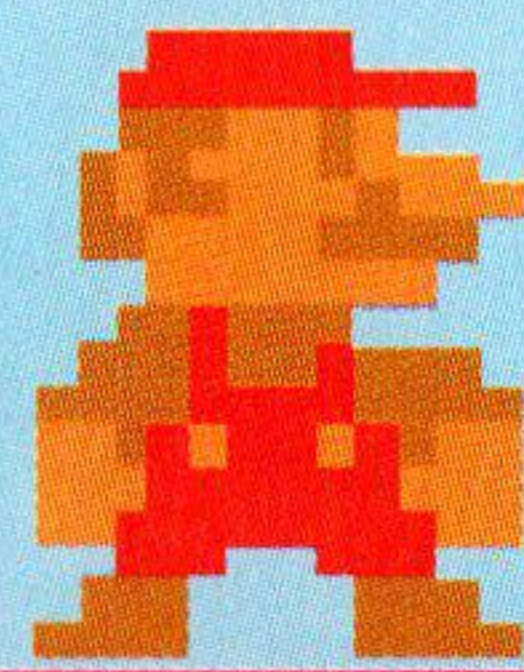
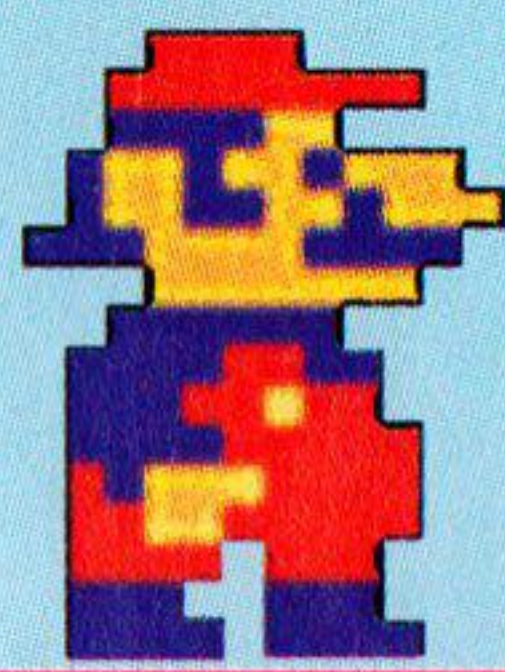
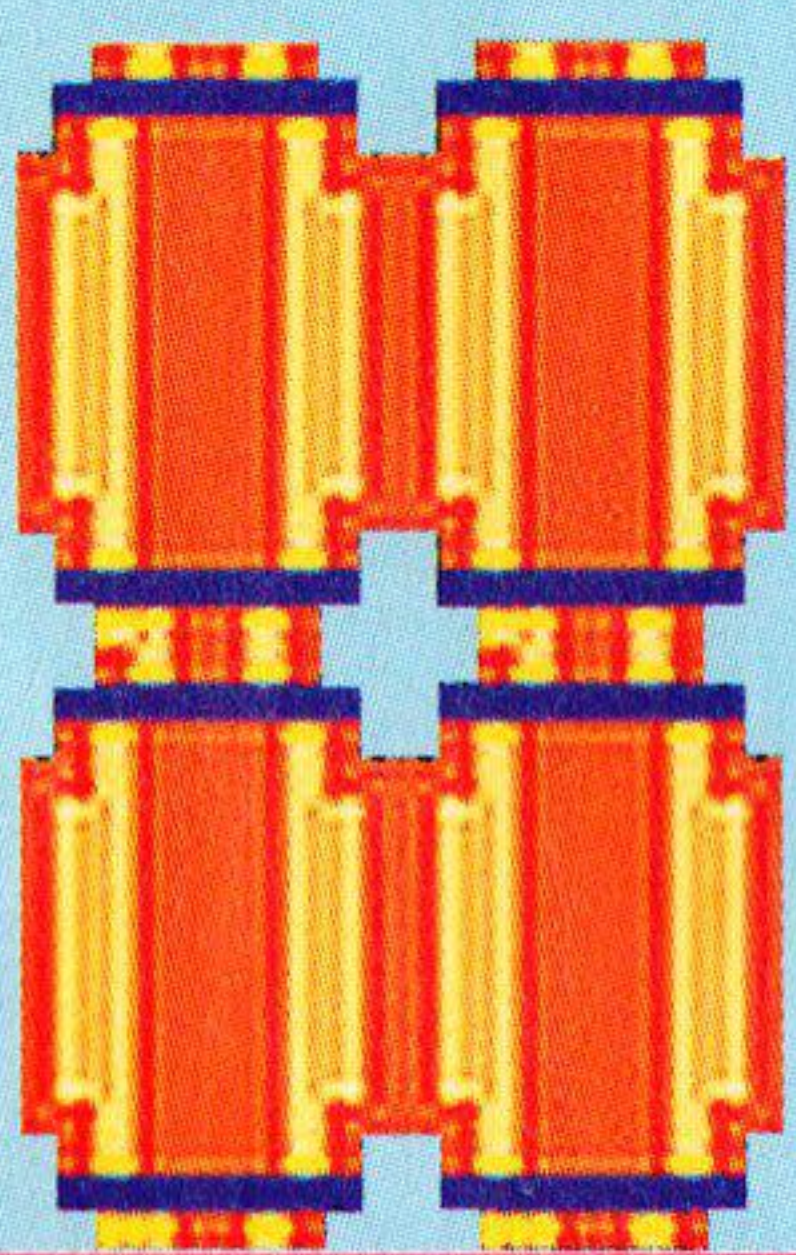
No, it isn't and, no, we didn't. You haven't played *VF3tb* on the Dreamcast, have you?

P.S. I bet you don't print this letter because...
Various monkeys

...it's crap. You're right

The History of **Super Mario**

...Or how to make some of the
best video games in history.



1981

1983

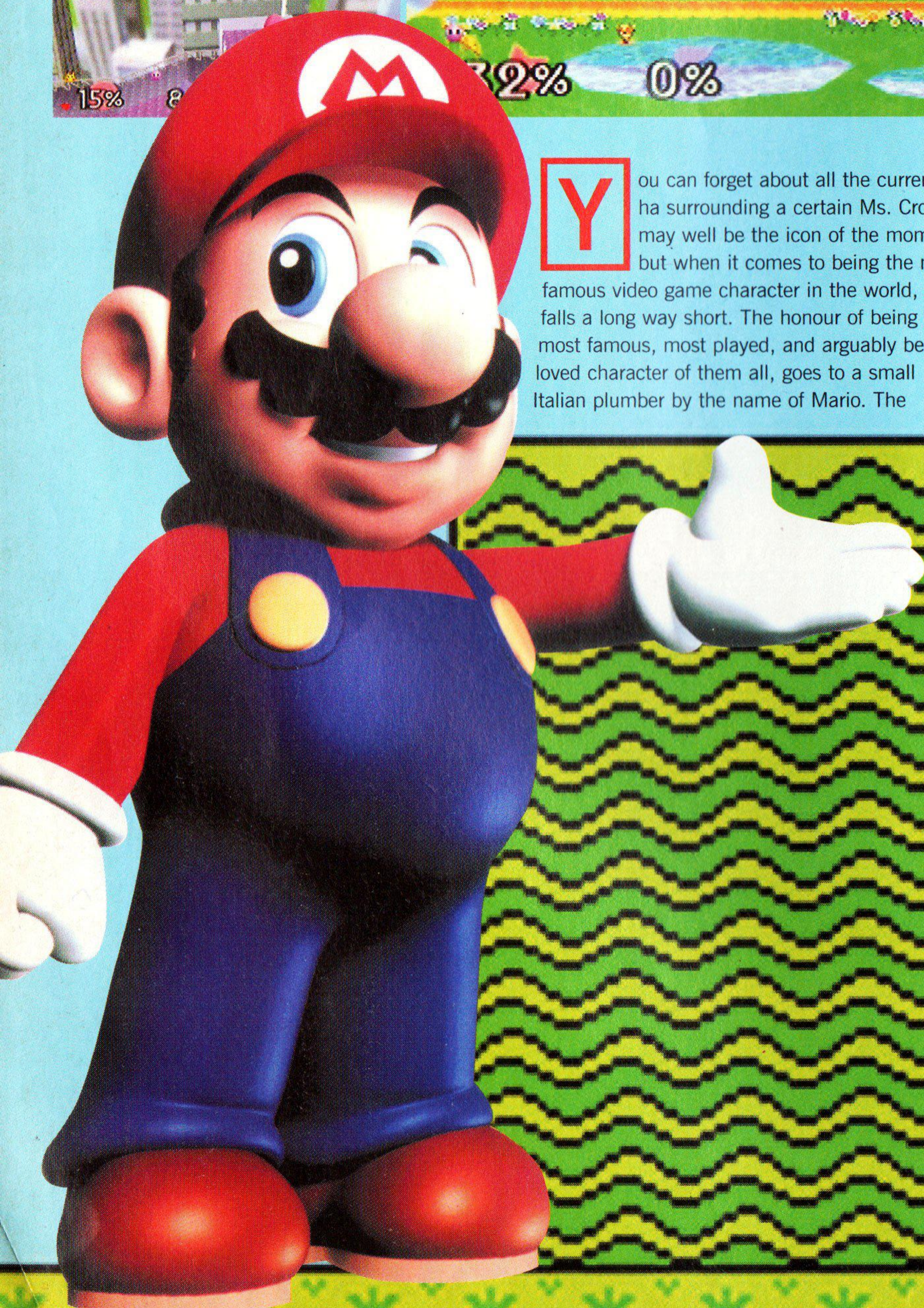
1985

1988

1990

1991

With **Nintendo's** announcement of three new **Mario-based** titles before the end of the year, Total CONTROL decided to take a **closer look at the history** of this industry's most enduring video game character...



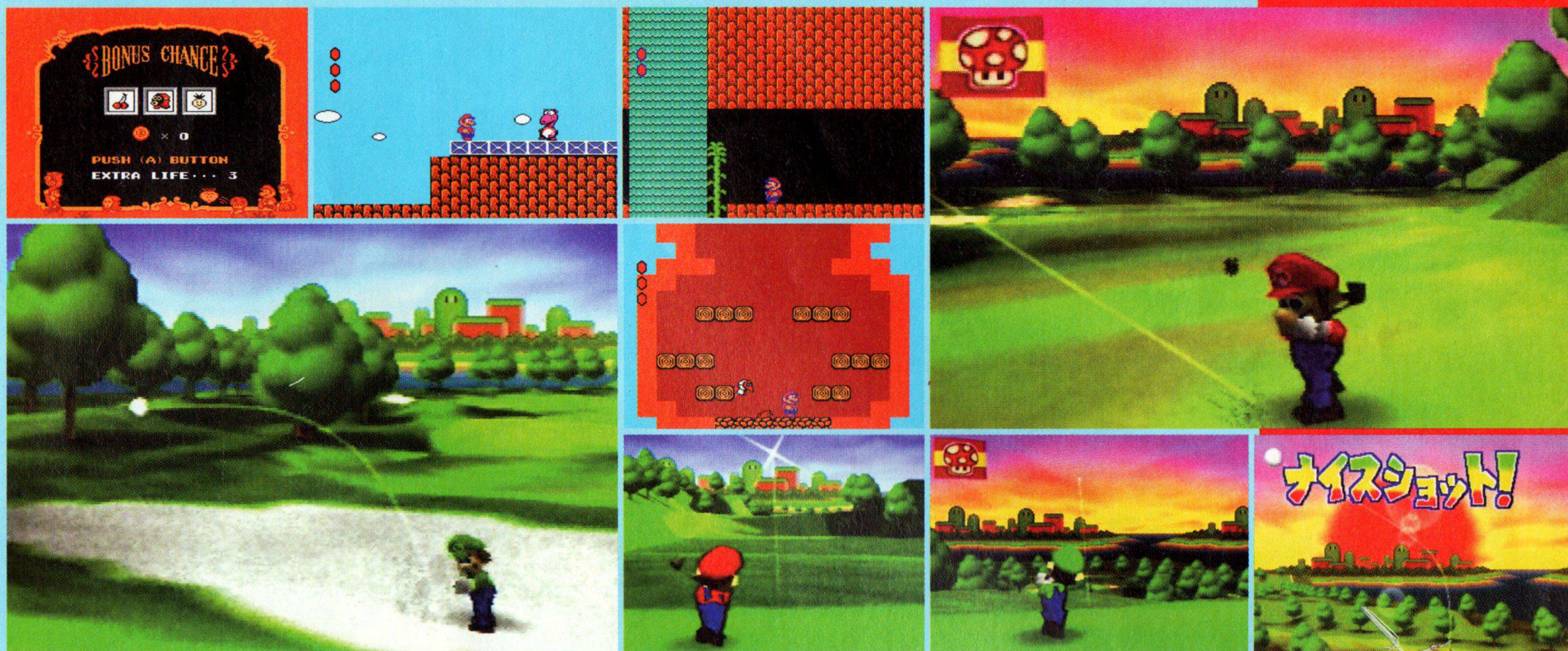
You can forget about all the current hoo-ha surrounding a certain Ms. Croft. She may well be the icon of the moment, but when it comes to being the most famous video game character in the world, she falls a long way short. The honour of being the most famous, most played, and arguably best loved character of them all, goes to a small Italian plumber by the name of Mario. The

influence this seemingly inconspicuous character has had over both the video game industry and the minds of small children from Tokyo to Timbuktu has been huge. Total CONTROL attempts to rediscover this most enduring of characters and find just why Mario is more popular than even Mickey Mouse...

The first steps

Mario started life as nothing more than bit-part character in one of the most popular arcade games of 1980. The real star of the game was a giant monkey who had kidnapped a princess and had her tied up at the top of a construction yard. The game was, of course, *Donkey Kong*, and the player took control of an eight pixel-sized character known only as Jumpman – a jumping character was a first for video games. He was to go on to become the biggest video game star of all time, and these humble aesthetic beginnings were to shape how he would look in all his future outings. For now, though, his task was simple: negotiate a series of platforms, defeat a boss character and rescue a princess. This simple formula was to become the essence of every one of the Mario games to come.

This game was Shigeru Miyamoto's second ever game for Nintendo after the relative flop of his *Popeye* arcade game. Who is Shigeru Miyamoto? Well, to some he is the Steven Spielberg of video games, to others he is Mr. Nintendo, whilst to others still he is known



The contrast between the look of Mario on the SNES and Mario on the N64 is stark. Gameplay, however, remains remarkably similar

simply as 'Shigs'. To put it bluntly, Miyamoto has been responsible for umpteen of the biggest selling games in history (his credits include *Star Fox*, *Zelda* and *Metroid*, to name but a few) and without him Nintendo would not be the

into five level worlds – the final level of each world would see a confrontation with King Koopa (later to be known as Bowser) and, eventually, the end of the game would see a final battle with Koopa for the Princess. The game also

ARE THESE GAMES WORTHY TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE GREATS OR ARE THEY AN UNASHAMED ATTEMPT BY NINTENDO TO MAKE A FEW EXTRA BUCKS?

company they are today. We will go on to see how, through the Mario games, Miyamoto has made possibly the biggest contribution to the artform of video games in its brief history.

How did Mario's name come about? Well, according to Nintendo folklore, he was named after a New York warehouse manager, Mario Sengali. We'll never know the truth behind this, but it's kind of nice to think that there was a real person behind the character.

Brothers in arms

Mario's leading role debut, along with his brother Luigi, was in the arcade game *Mario Bros*. Quite unlike any of the later games, this was a single screen platformer where the objective was simply to score as many points as possible by killing the enemies emerging from two pipes at the top of the screen, and many of them went on to feature heavily in the later games. Killing the bad guys was a simple matter of either hitting the platform below them or jumping on their heads – are you beginning to see where the later stuff comes from? These two games contain the basic elements of all Mario games – platforms, killing enemies by jumping on their heads, boss characters and rescuing a princess.

The next step, where these two games came together, was in *Super Mario Bros.*, which appeared on Nintendo's first home console, the NES. Here was a sideways (from left to right) scrolling platformer which was divided up

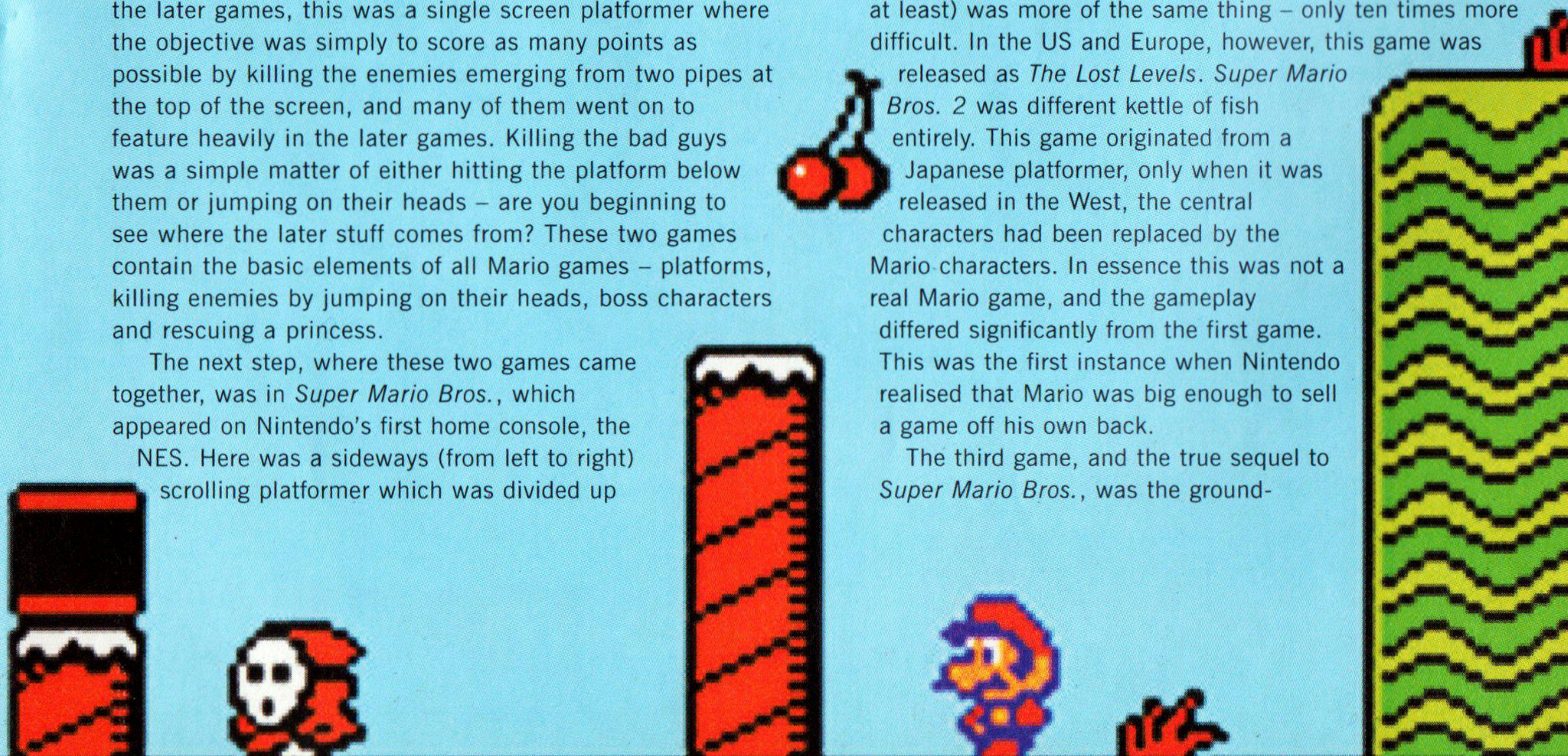
introduced the idea of secret areas, where a little exploration of the beaten path would see the player rewarded with extra lives and other bonuses. Other innovations included collection of 100 gold coins for an extra life (a feature copied by almost every platform since), a points bonus for completing the levels quickly, and the system of a 'super' Mario (hence the name) where, by collecting a mushroom, our hero would grow twice the size and could withstand one hit from an enemy. There was also a power-up that transformed Mario into a fireman, and this idea of different abilities would be explored later on in the series.

The follow-up to this hugely successful game was, unsurprisingly, called *Super Mario Brothers 2*, and (in Japan at least) was more of the same thing – only ten times more difficult. In the US and Europe, however, this game was released as *The Lost Levels*. *Super Mario Bros. 2* was different kettle of fish entirely. This game originated from a Japanese platformer, only when it was released in the West, the central characters had been replaced by the Mario characters. In essence this was not a real Mario game, and the gameplay differed significantly from the first game. This was the first instance when Nintendo realised that Mario was big enough to sell a game off his own back.

The third game, and the true sequel to *Super Mario Bros.*, was the ground-

HE'S GOT A LOT OF CHARACTER

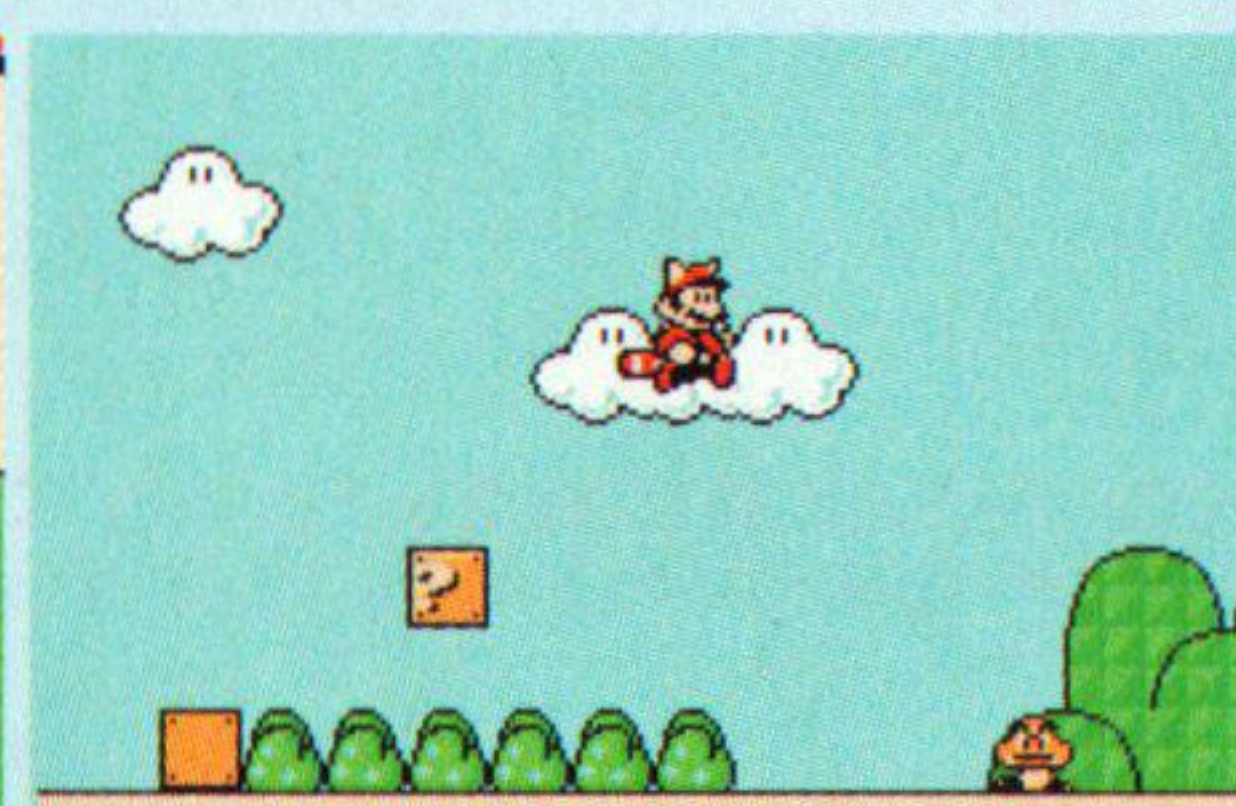
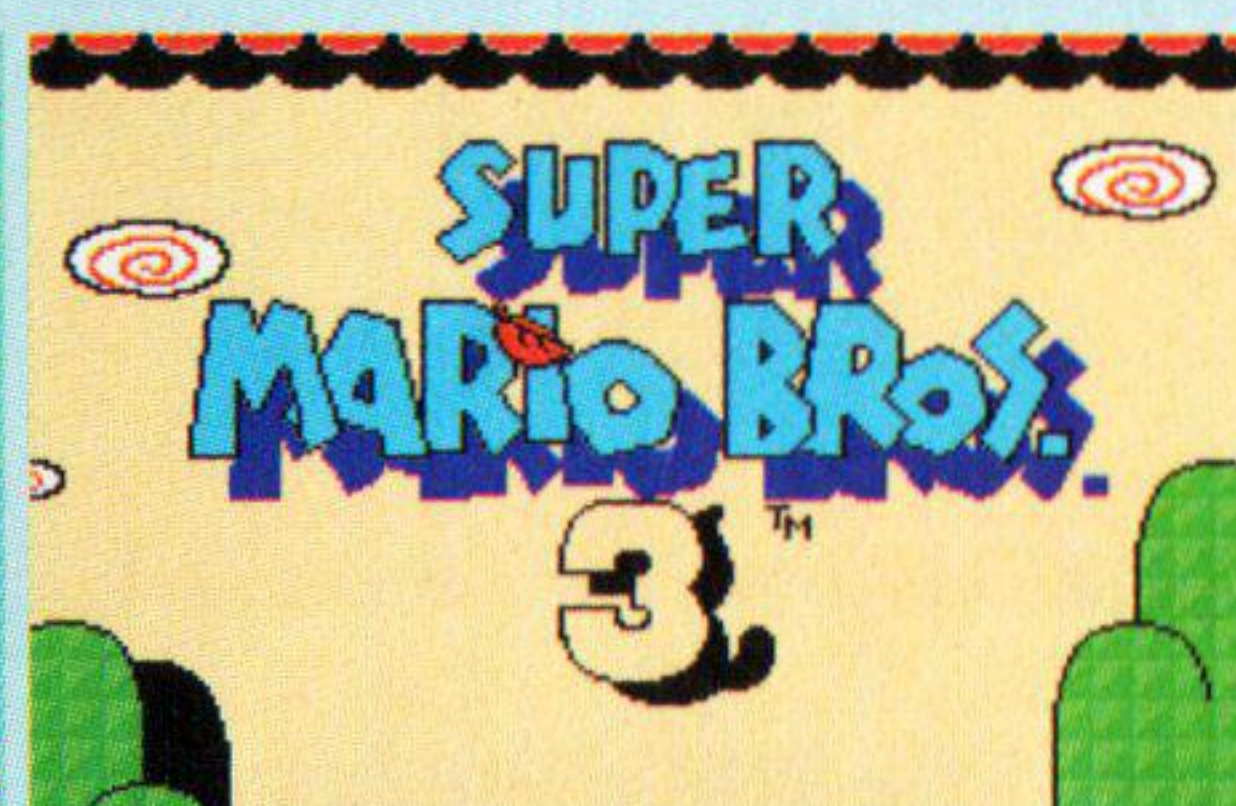
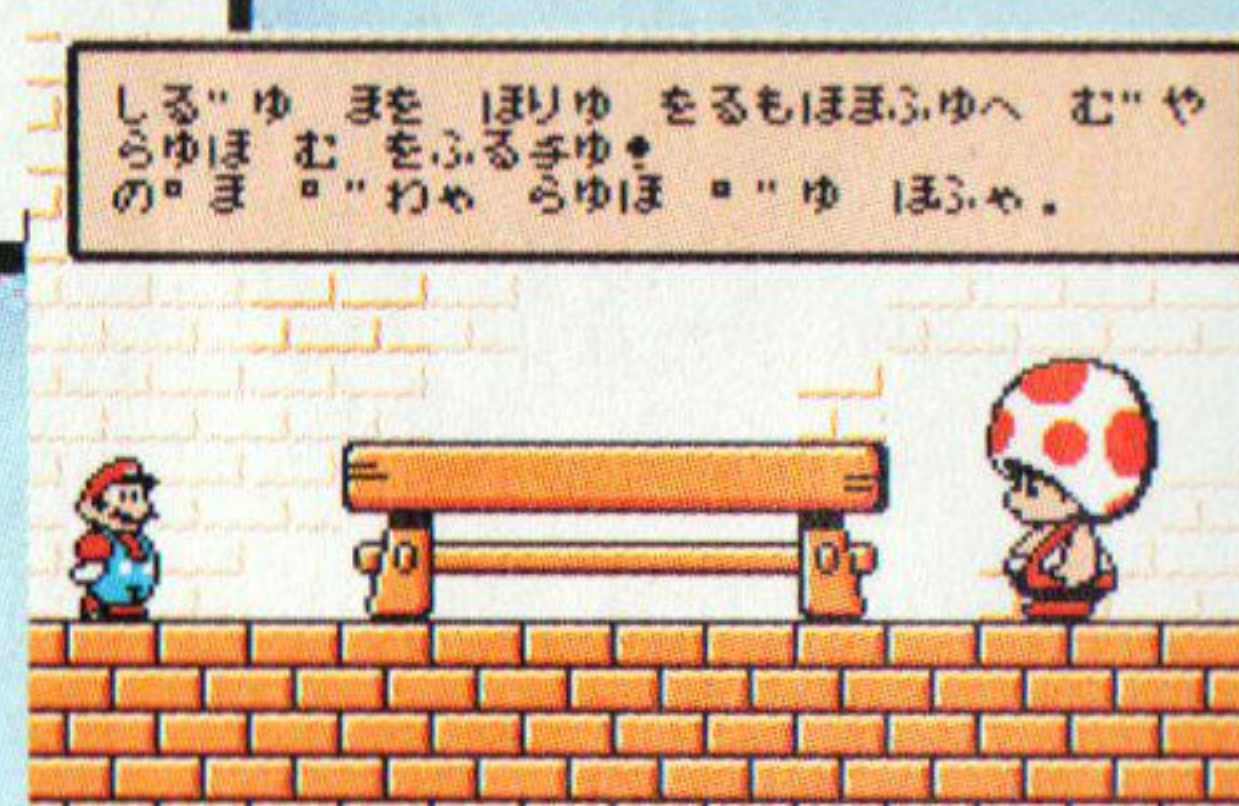
Mario's appeal does not just lie purely in the quality of the games, although this does play a large part. Perhaps the character himself plays a significant part to the appeal of the games – indeed, he displays some classic design, worthy of Disney. Classically stylised, with the large eyes, a round face and dressed in bright, primary colours, Mario displays all the qualities to endear him to children and adults alike. He offers no threat and, to the contrary, he represents fun. Mario is almost always depicted with a smile on his face.





MARIO VS. SONIC

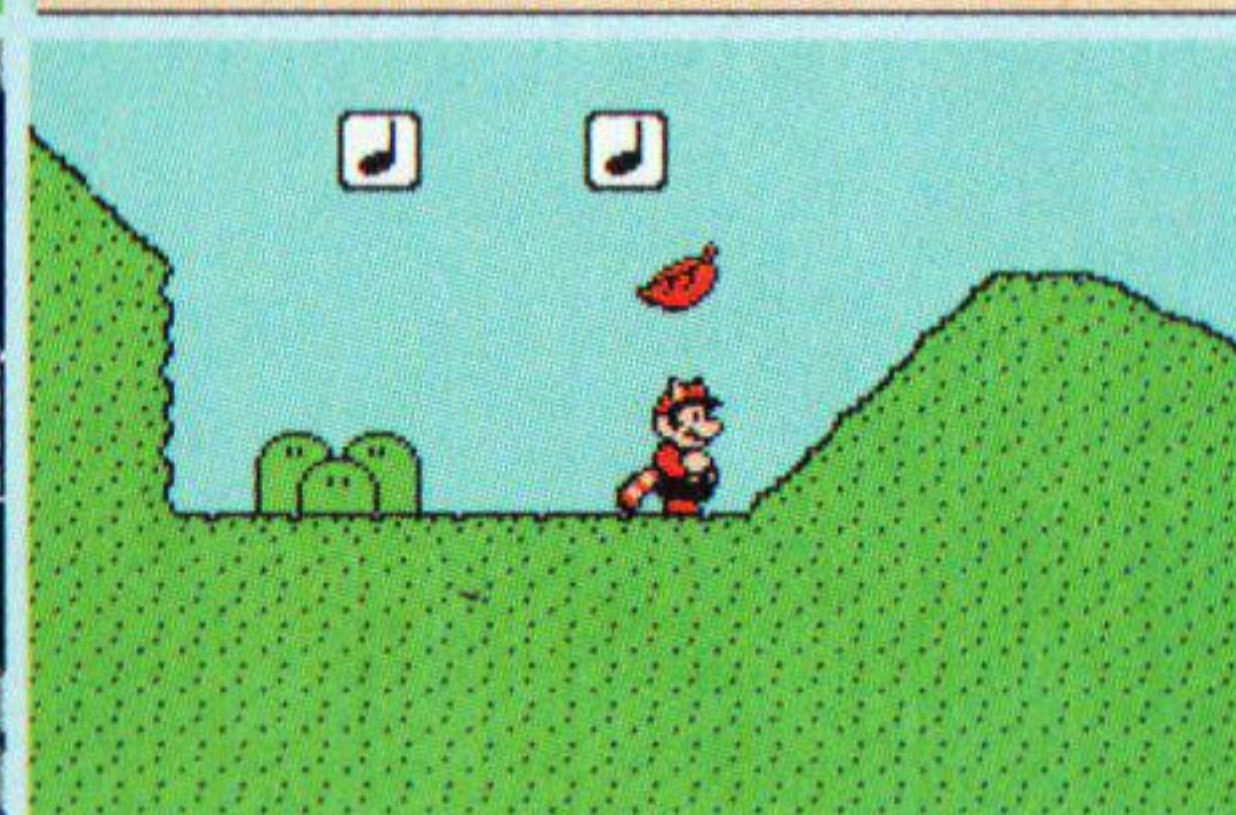
In the days of the 16-bit console battles, Sonic the Hedgehog was Sega's main weapon against Nintendo's Mario, and the two were pitched in a platform character war to the death. This was one of the contributing factors to Sega's dominance in the US and Europe over arch rivals Nintendo. Although the Mario games are considered to be far superior to any of the Sonic games, it was perceived value – image – that was important. As much as Mario represented Nintendo with his rounded, fun, almost child-like qualities, the hedgehog epitomised Sega in those days: fast, streamlined and altogether more hip. But times change, and now the Mario games are considered far superior to Sega's recent efforts with the hedgehog. Will this all change with *Sonic Adventures* on Dreamcast?



breaking *Super Mario Bros. 3*, which first appeared on the NES. This game was revolutionary at the time and offered the most engrossing platform adventure ever seen. There were so many cool ideas in it. The game retained the now classic sideways scrolling platform action, but Miyamoto filled the levels with all manner of ingenious puzzles. These usually involved the 'de-shelled' turtles and your subsequent use of that shell to destroy blocks to allow you to get to secret areas and gain extra power-ups. The game also encouraged exploration, and indeed some of the levels worked not only from left to right but also vertically. Some also challenged the player with levels that moved by themselves; players had to progress before the end of the level caught up with them.

This was also the first game that introduced the map idea, where all the levels in a particular world were placed on a map. This allowed the player to play levels in different orders, skip levels and take multiple routes to the boss castle. Also, on these maps were located many sub-games – games that would reward the player with extra lives or other bonuses. These took the form of slot

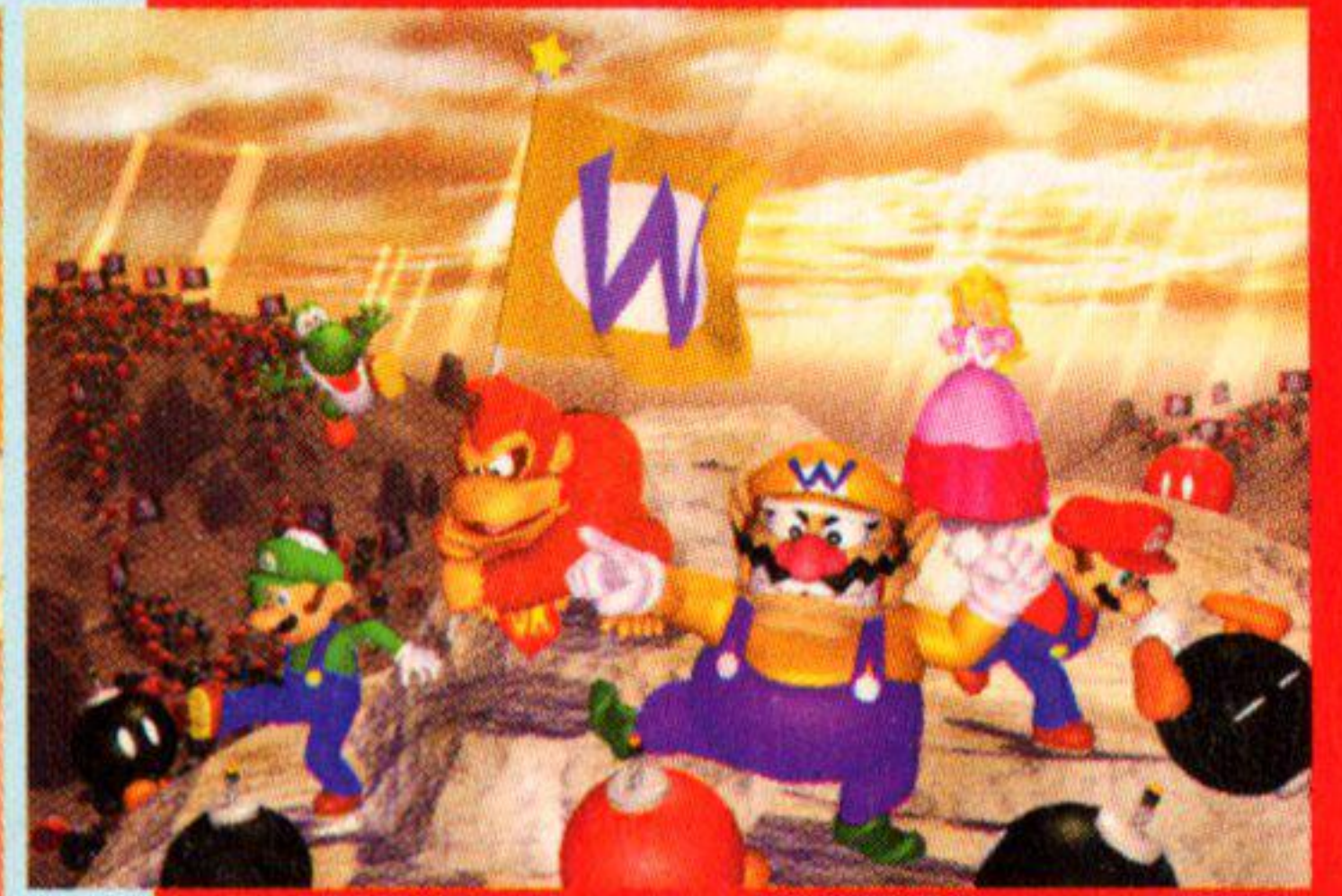
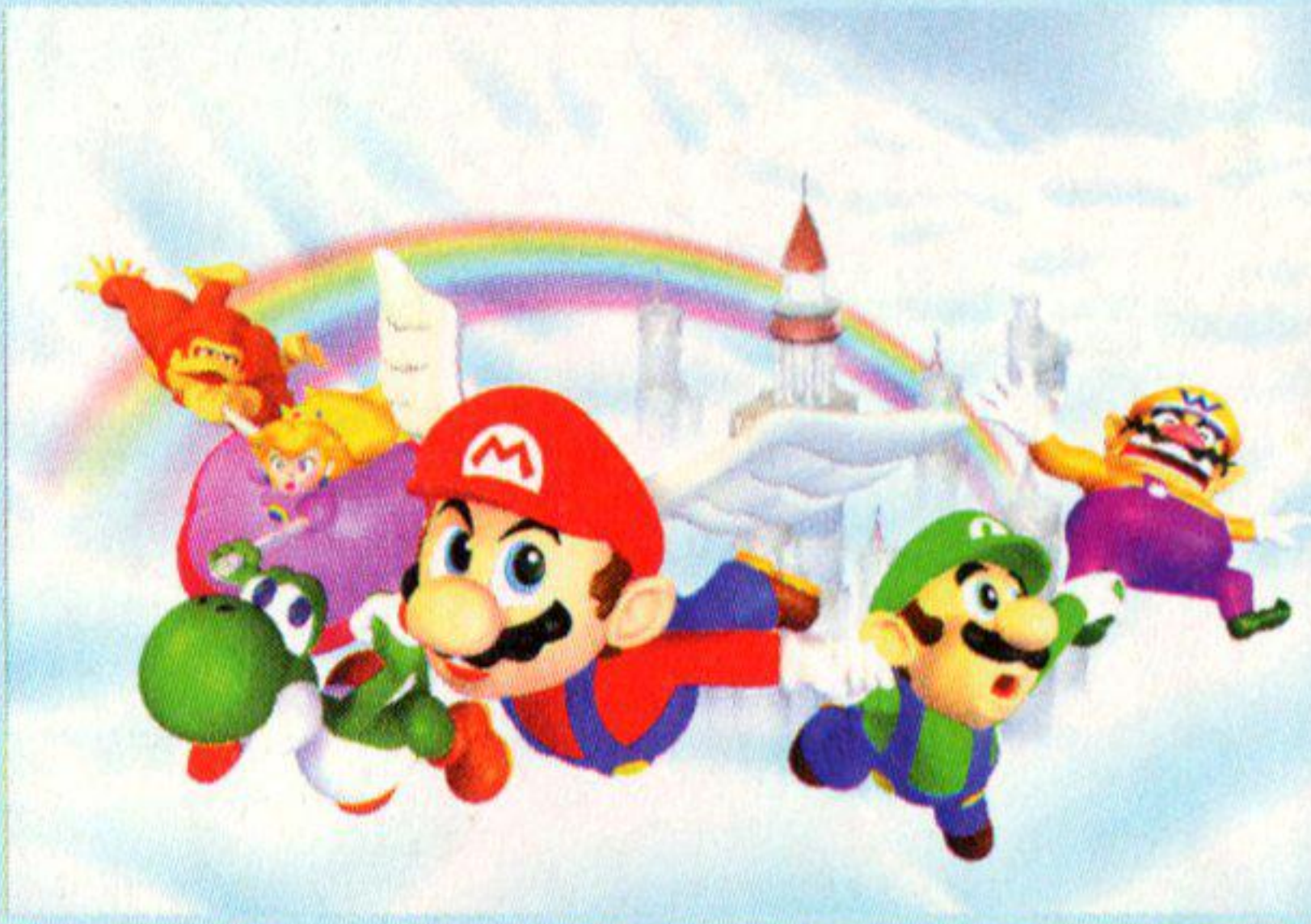
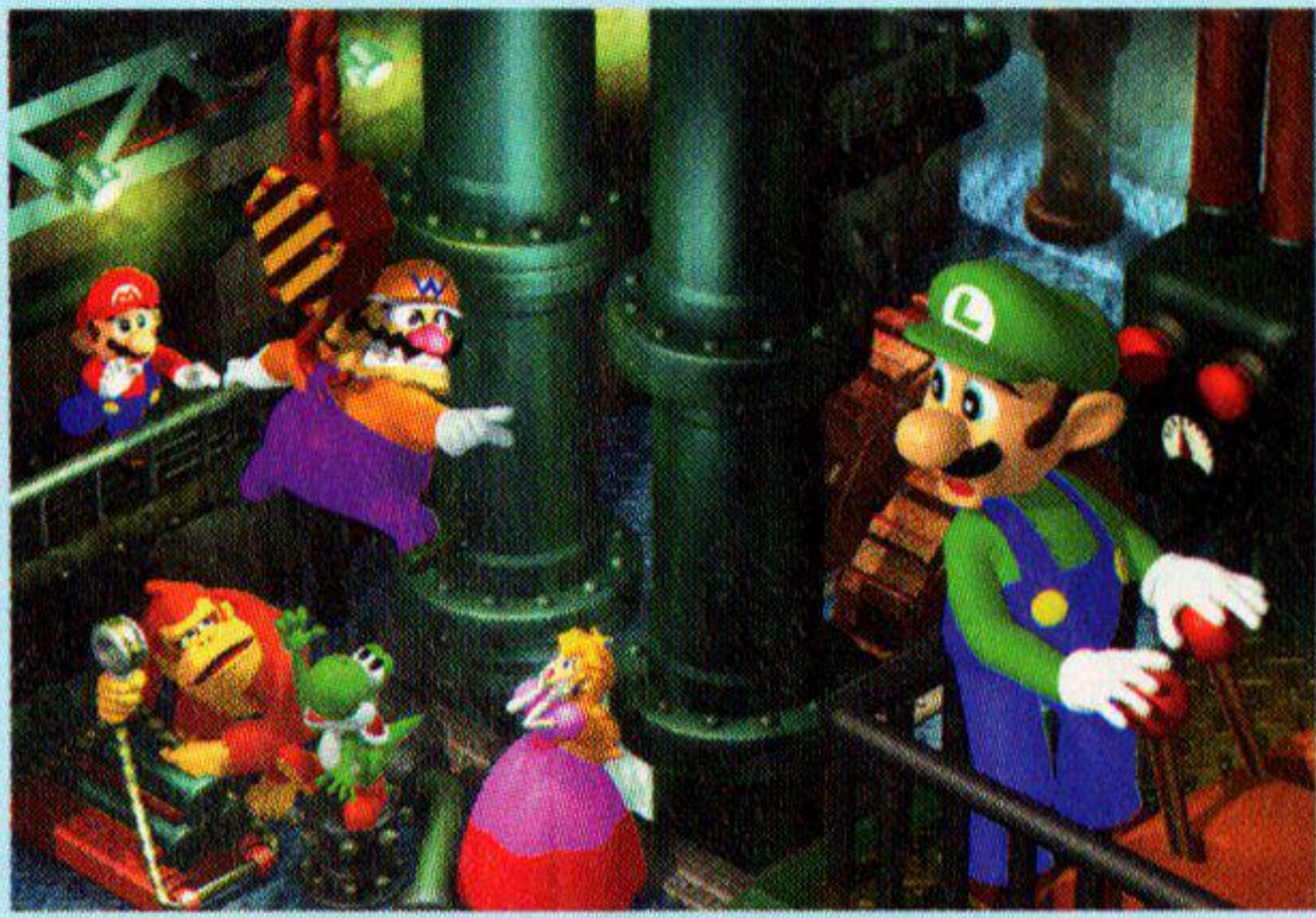
machine games, choosing one of three chests for a bonus and defeating sub-bosses. Basically, this game was in a class all of its own, and the invention in *SMB3* has rarely been seen since.



The era of the SNES

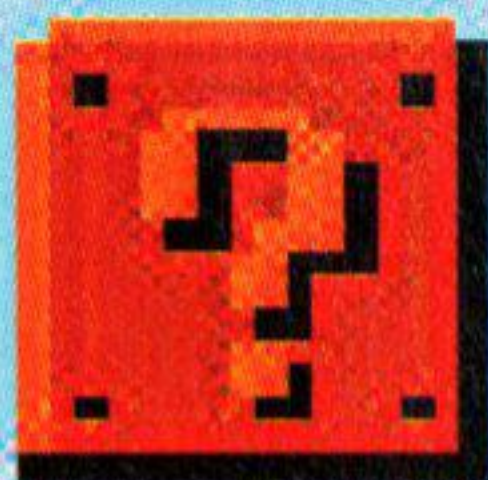
One of the most important launch titles for the SNES was *Super Mario 4* (AKA *Super Mario World*). The platformer built on the solid foundations of the third game and then polished every one of that game's features and added a whole load of its own. *SMW* is still arguably the best ever 2D platformer, and it deserves to be played by anyone with a liking for such things.

Back came the map interface first seen in *SMB3*, but this was a more refined system that allowed players to discover secret areas. Multiple routes were also to play a large part in the game, and *Mario 4* had a huge number of levels – 112 in total – and some of them were the most fiendishly designed levels the genre has ever seen. Levels were also designed for players to come back and revisit them to discover secret areas. This was largely done by activating 'switch palaces' which in turn activated coloured blocks that allowed access to secret areas. A mammoth game that (again) redefined the boundaries of platform games.



Smash Bros uses all the famous (and infamous) Mario characters

As the sequel to the superlative *SMW*, *Yoshi's Island* certainly had its work cut out to live up to the reputation of its predecessors. Miyamoto still had a few feathers to his bow and introduced enough new ideas to make this game yet another classic in the series. For starters, players did not have direct control over Mario – this time he was a baby and a passenger on the back of Yoshi. The general idea of the game was to transport the tiny plumber across a number of levels to rescue Luigi from the clutches of Bowser. As an interesting take on the 'super' idea of having two hits before you die, your first 'hit'

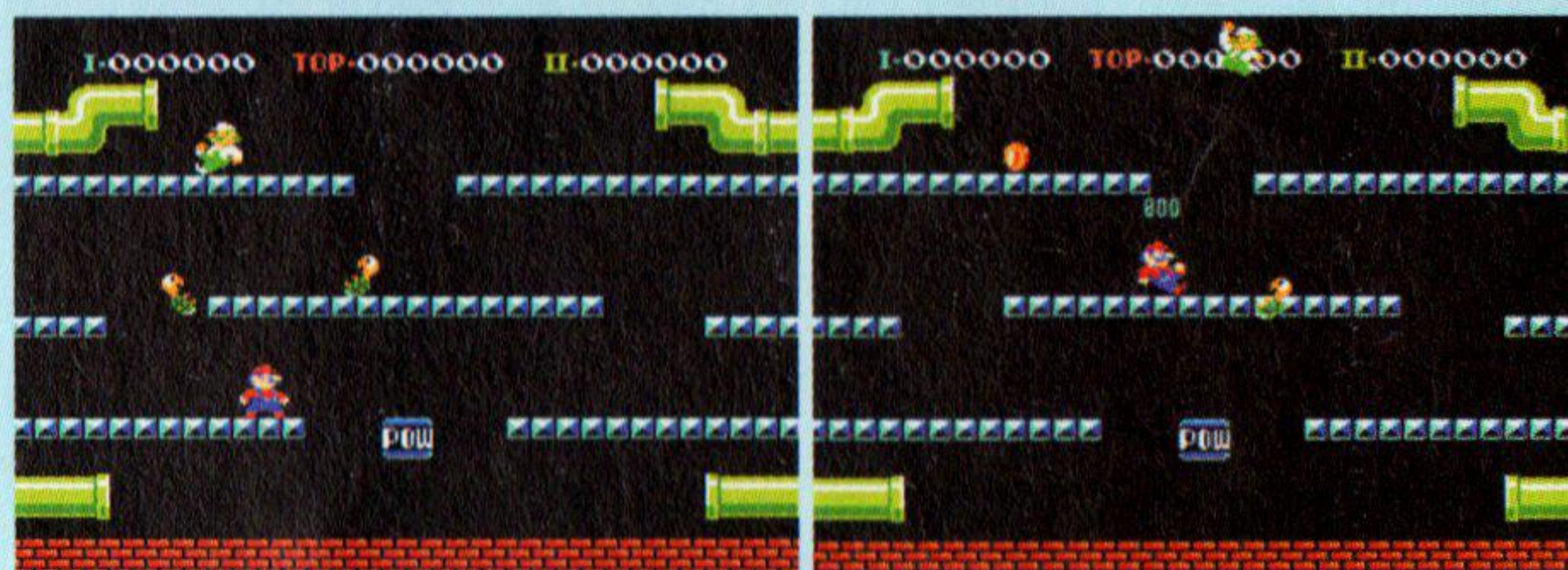
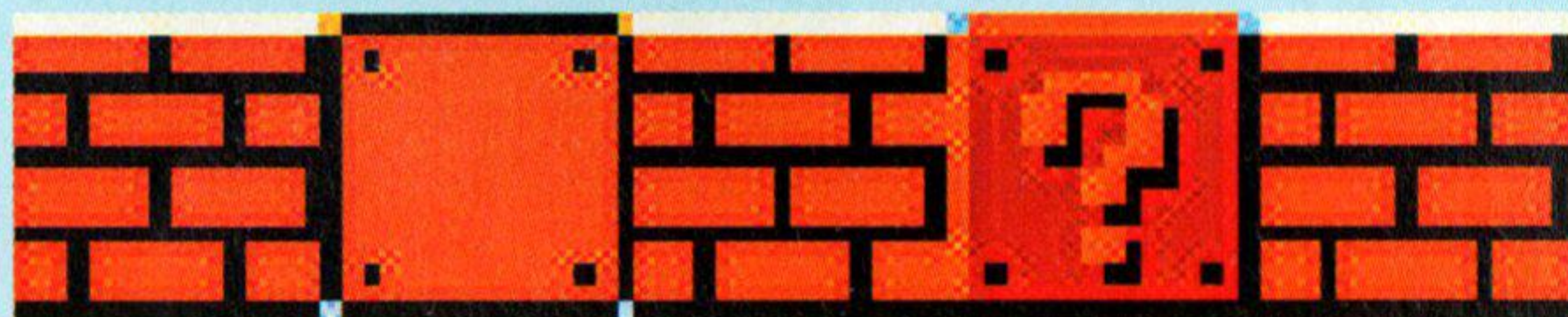


WORK HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN ON SM64 2, AND IN MIYAMOTO'S WORDS, "WE ONLY HAVE MARIO AND LUIGI UP AND RUNNING AROUND ON SCREEN"

would launch baby Mario into the air, floating in a bubble. You then had a few seconds to recapture him before Bowser's minions would fly down and capture him.

Into three dimensions

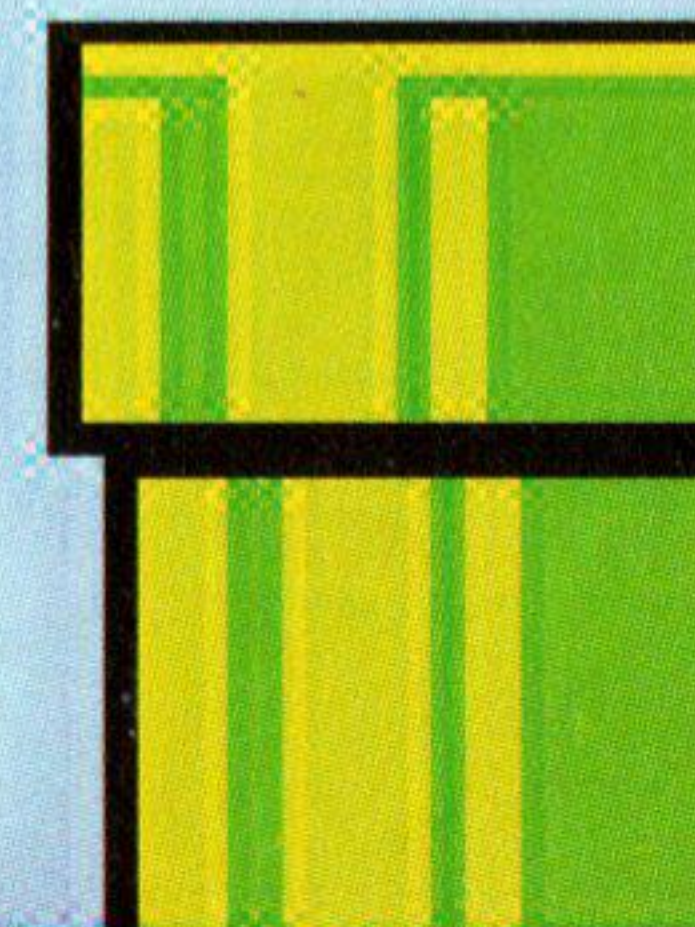
It was at this point that the series branched off into the age of Nintendo 64. Mario returned as the central character in the 3D game and Yoshi carried the mantle of 2D in *Yoshi's Story*. Of course, what Miyamoto achieved with *Super Mario 64* is now consigned to history. It was the first successful 3D platformer that deserves to be viewed not only as a game but a great experiment in 3D. After all, many of the game's best features were already seen in *Mario 4* – the power-ups that changed our hero's abilities,



the secret areas and sub-games were all seen before in 2D form. The big attraction was (and still is) the look and feel of the game; for the first time players felt like they were taking part in a massive cartoon adventure. However, for some intangible reason *Mario 64* did not possess the same addictive qualities of

the 2D games, and players complained that the game became tedious when the set puzzles had been solved and all that remained was the collection of 20 red coins and 100 gold coins as the only tasks left to complete. Still, *Mario 64* remains arguably the best 3D platformer yet – only Rare's *Banjo-Kazooie* can claim to have come close to emulating the joy that Miyamoto's game has given to millions.

Yoshi's Story continued the tradition of the Miyamoto platformer, only in a much-revised and economical way. That is to be kind to a game which should have been *SMW* for the N64 but was lacking in many departments, mostly because the game has less than thirty levels. The game can still boast the classic traits of a Miyamoto platformer and has some of the most wonderfully drawn visuals ever seen in a game of this genre. *Yoshi's Story* does have some delightful moments, but it is



I WANT TO BE MARIO = GAMES THAT HAVE TRIED TO COPY THE GREATEST

The sincerest form of flattery is copying, and if this is to be taken literally then Mario must be the most flattered video game character ever. These are some of the games that have tried (and failed) to emulate the success of Nintendo's man.

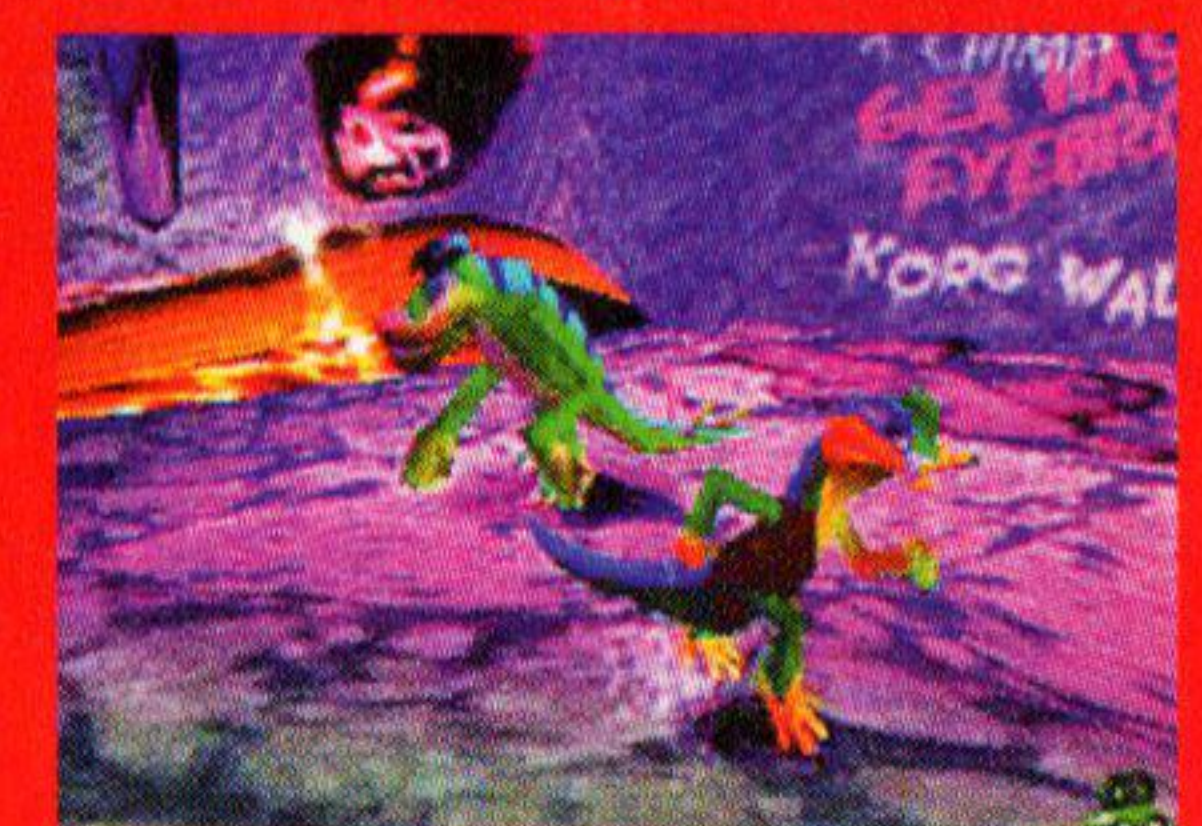
Zool – Gremlin



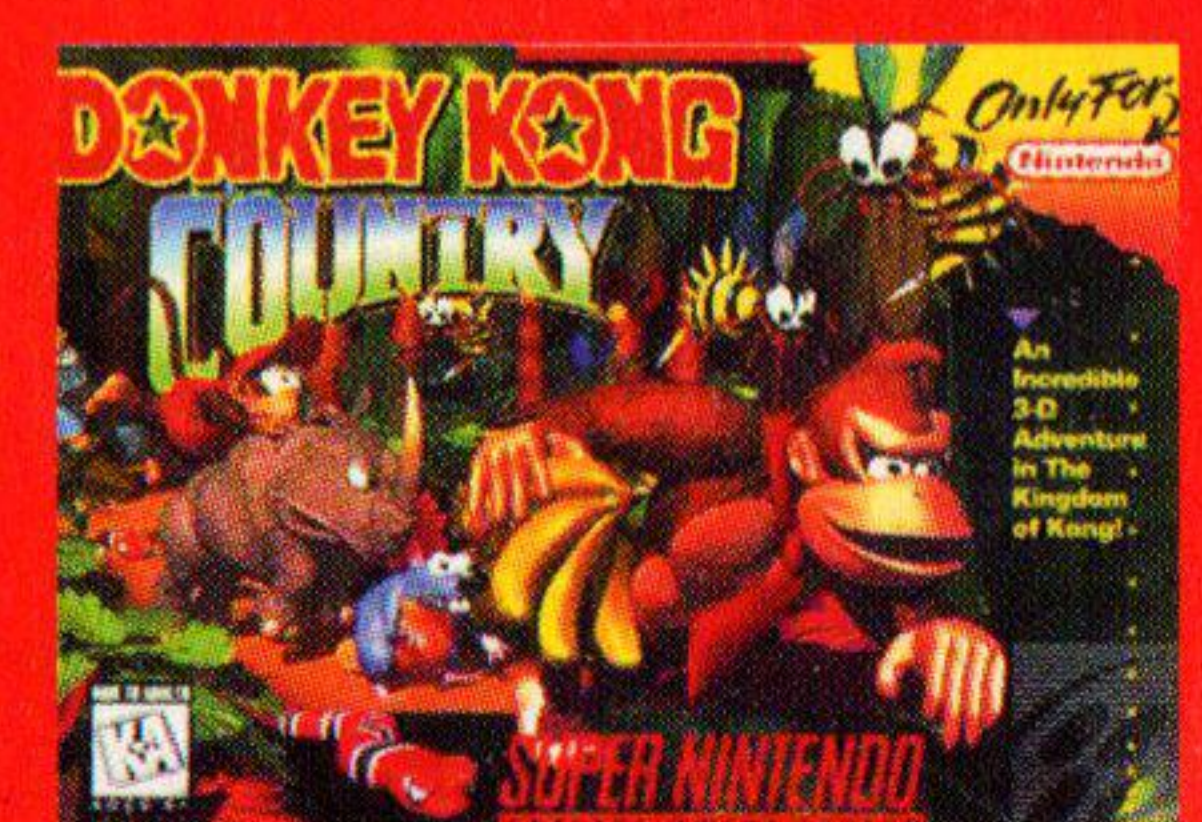
Croc – Fox Interactive



Gex 3D – Crystal Dynamics

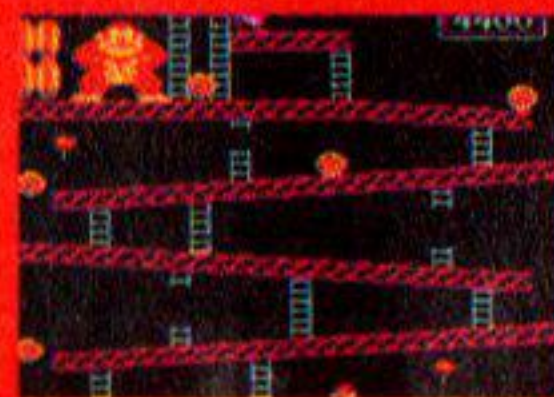


DKC – Rare



MARIO = LICENCE TO PRINT MONEY

Nintendo were not slow to realise that their character was popular enough that if a game had an association with him then it would sell by the bucketload. This is a complete listing of Mario's video game appearances – cameo roles included.



1981 – The Donkey Kong Series (Arcade, NES)



1983 – Mario Bros. (NES, Arcade)



Oct 1985 – Super Mario Brothers (NES, Arcade)



1982 – Tennis (Arcade, NES)

1983 – Mario Bros. (NES, Arcade)



Oct 1985 – Super Mario Brothers (NES, Arcade)



1988 – Mike Tyson's Punch Out!! (NES)

Aug 1988 – Super Mario Land (Gameboy)



Oct 1988 – Super Mario Brothers 2 (US, UK, NES)



Feb 1990 – Super Mario Brothers 3 (NES)



Oct 1990 – Dr. Mario (NES, Gameboy, SNES)

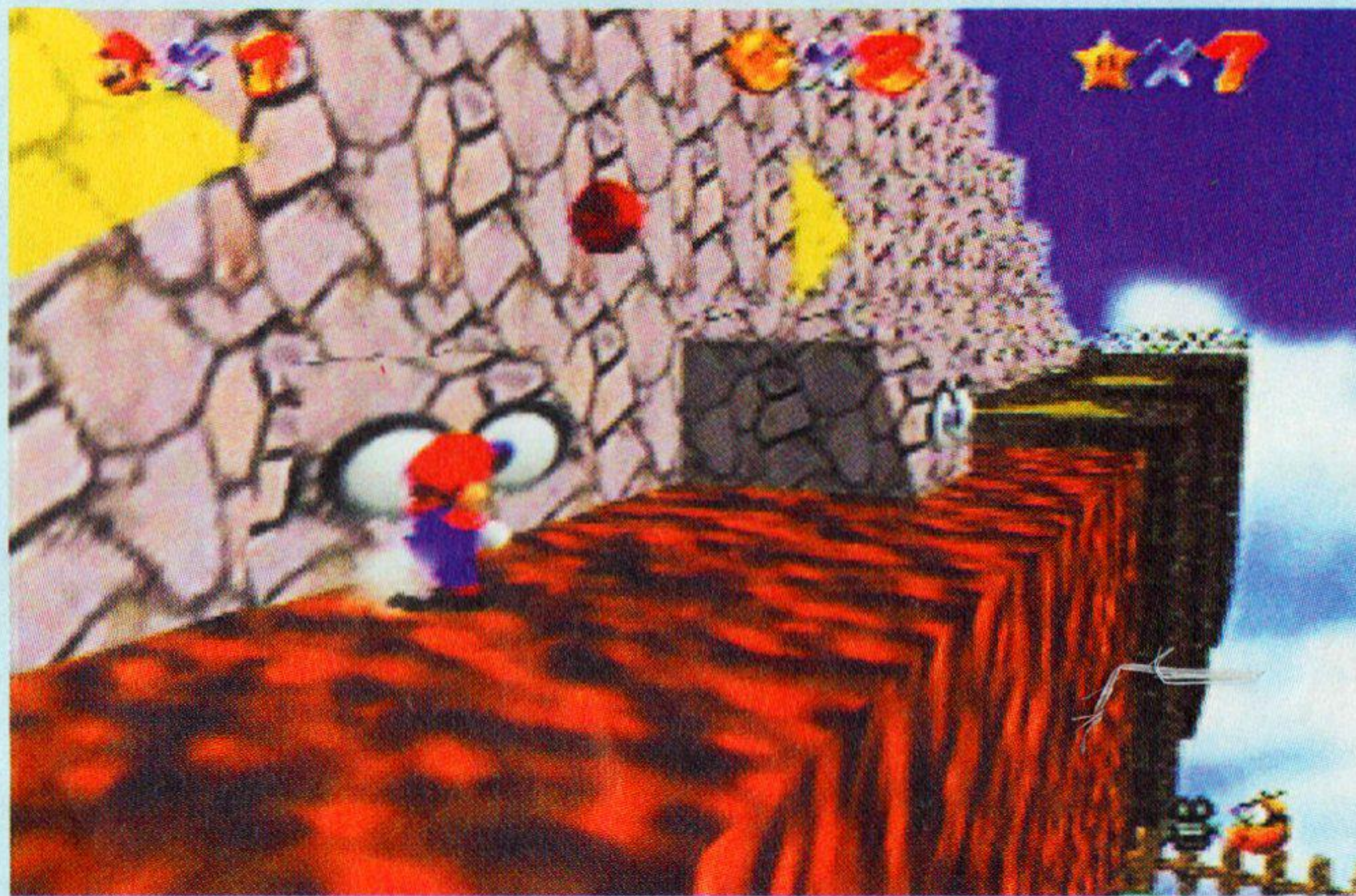
Aug 1991 – Super Mario World (SNES)



Nov 1992 – Mario Land 2 (Gameboy)



Even the bad guys are portrayed in the same way as Mario – round and fun



strangely easy and has little replay value. But then this game is not truly Miyamoto – a quick look at the credits is enough to confirm that he was only an executive producer of the game.

The future?

Now that *Zelda 64* has been finished, Miyamoto can turn his attention to what really will be the most anticipated video game of all-time, namely the sequel to *Super Mario 64*. However, it is not yet known what machine the game will eventually appear on. Because of the delays to *Zelda*, work has only just begun on the



game, and in Miyamoto's words, "We only have Mario and Luigi up and running around on screen". If the game takes two years to develop (about average for a Miyamoto game) then we may have to wait for the next Nintendo console to play it. *Super Mario 128* for a launch title on the Nintendo 2000 anyone?

Of course, the platformer is not the only genre of video game that Mario has appeared in. Who can forget the sublime *Super Mario Kart* on the SNES? A wonderful game in its own right and not at all related to the platform exploits of Mario and his chums. It would have sold even if Nintendo had made a bunch of nobodies as the main characters... but hey, if ain't broke and all that...



MIYAMOTO SPEAKS:

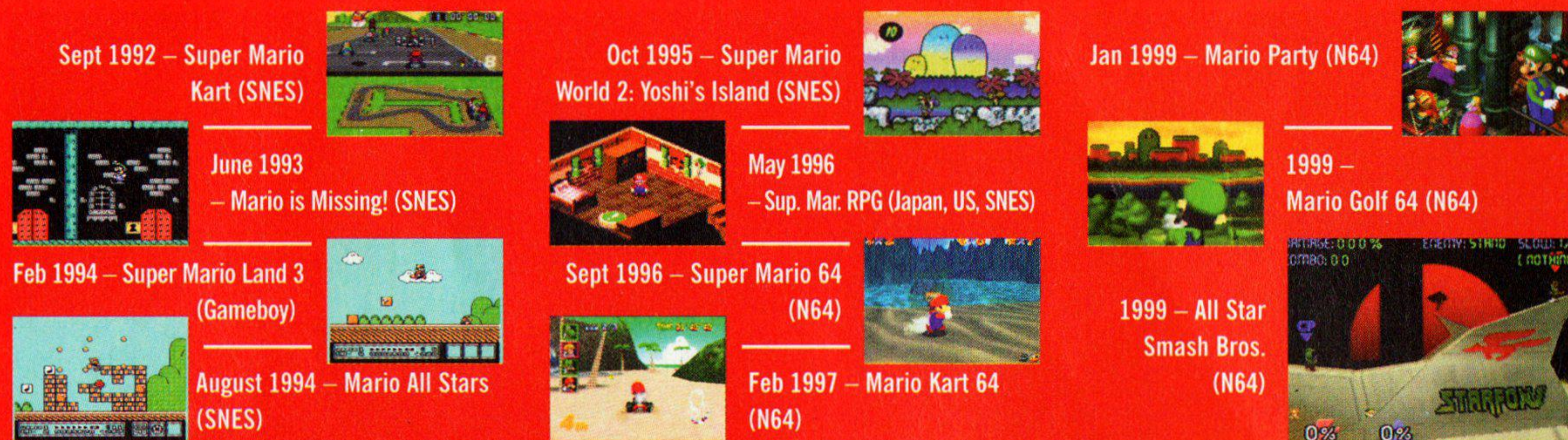
"I think that basically the point that we were focusing on with *SM64* – and this may or may not be a lesson to others – is that in the past, 3D games have been developed selfishly by the creators. We came at *SM64* from the other side and

tried to cater to the selfishness of the users and their desire for control, a good game camera, and ease of play. This was not a lesson for us, because we have known that this was the best way to do it since we first started experimenting with 3D using the FX chip for the

Super NES. So the *SM64* project was more of a reminder to us, and it reconfirmed that, as with all games, you have to cater to the users' desires. Also, we learned a lot while making *SM64* about the potential of the Nintendo 64 hardware itself. And while making the game, I discovered many points about the game's 3D engine that could be modified or improved. We didn't have time to implement these changes during *SM64*, but now, as we start work on the next games – *Zelda*, for example – we can complete a tune-up of the *SM64* system, and games like *F-Zero* can be a completely new version.

Miyamoto on how *Mario 64* has taught him a few things about 3D:

"I have noticed that a lot of kindergarten kids are better than I



Super Mario 64 singlehandedly changed the way that people would use 3D in games. It has spawned many wannabes

One of the best games ever to feature Mario was *Super Mario RPG* - a game from Squaresoft which sadly never made it to Europe. Fortunately, that game's sequel looks certain to make it over here, and an interesting prospect it looks too. Essentially a 'kids' RPG, *Mario RPG 2* has the look of *PaRappa the Rapper* about it, with flat

developed in-house, it has all the trademarks of a classic NCL game. As you might expect from Nintendo, *All-Star Smash Bros.* is not content to fall snugly into the convention of the beat-'em-up genre.

The game features Nintendo's most recognisable characters - Mario (obviously), Princess Peach, Donkey Kong, Link, Fox McCloud, Luigi, Samus Aran (from the *Metroid* games) and Yoshi. Each has his or her

WITH THE LARGE EYES, A ROUND FACE AND DRESSED IN BRIGHT, PRIMARY COLOURS, MARIO DISPLAYS ALL THE QUALITIES TO ENDEAR HIM TO CHILDREN AND ADULTS ALIKE

cut-out characters in a three dimensional world. Expect it some time towards the end of the year.

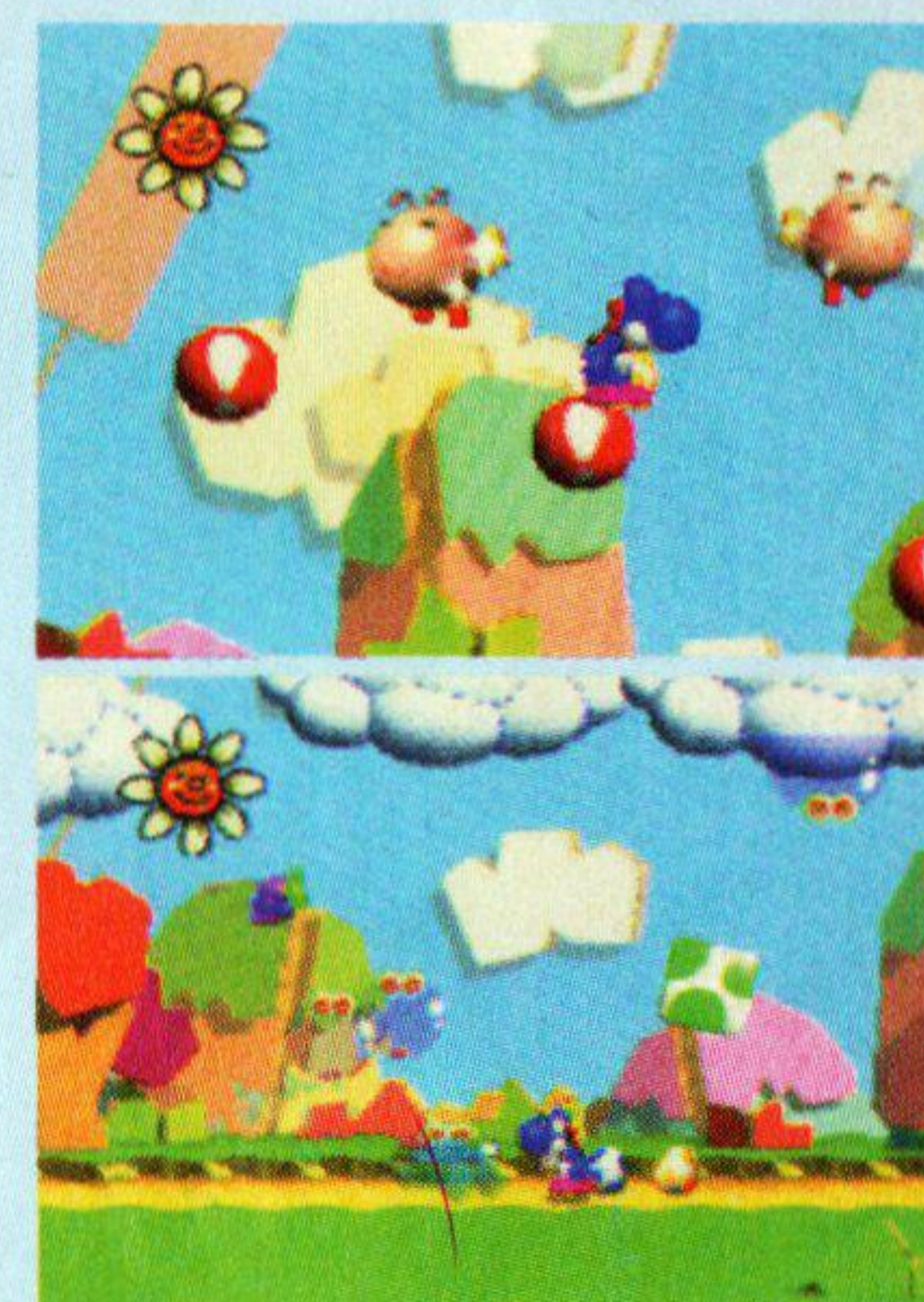
The new Mario games

The latest batch of Mario-titled games follow the same path as *Mario Kart*. *Mario Party* is essentially a board game that features the characters from the platformers - you can find out more elsewhere in this issue. *Mario Golf* is pretty self-explanatory, and you can also find more details elsewhere. The most intriguing of the three is *All-Star Smash Bros.* - Nintendo's first attempt at a fighting game. Although the game is not being



strengths and special attacks, and these are remarkably different from a bog standard fighting game.

Are we to look on these new Mario games as worthy to follow in the footsteps of the greats or are they an unashamed attempt by Nintendo to make a few bucks off the most recognisable video game character in the world? Only time and the playability of these titles will tell if they can stand up for all that Mario represents: innovation, playability and, above all, pure, unadulterated fun.



Yoshi's Story could have been a *Super Mario World* for the N64 - it isn't

am at playing *SM64* - so it seems that it has appealed to the younger audience."

Miyamoto on the response to *Mario 64*:

"In the 1980s, when we started on the original *Zelda* and *Super Mario Bros.*, we had the same kind of concepts for each game, so it's no wonder that the two series are converging and that *Super Mario 64* is approaching the *Zelda* concept. Even though the underlying structures of the two games are converging, emotionally I think that people will have different experiences with the two games. With *Zelda* you are supposed to be in a certain age, in a certain year in the past, and you are put into certain situations, and

you will feel, or even 'smell the air' and feel how 'warm' or 'cold' it is in the *Zelda* world. It will feel like a very different game."

Miyamoto on the similarities between Mario and *Zelda*:

"He was in *Mario 64* about half a year before completion, and we also planned to have him pop up in *Mario RPG*, but he 'disappeared on the way.' I'm sure that in the games to come we will meet this whimsical character again."

Miyamoto on UK-based developers Rare:

"Rare does great work. *Banjo-Kazooie* is so good and we can only

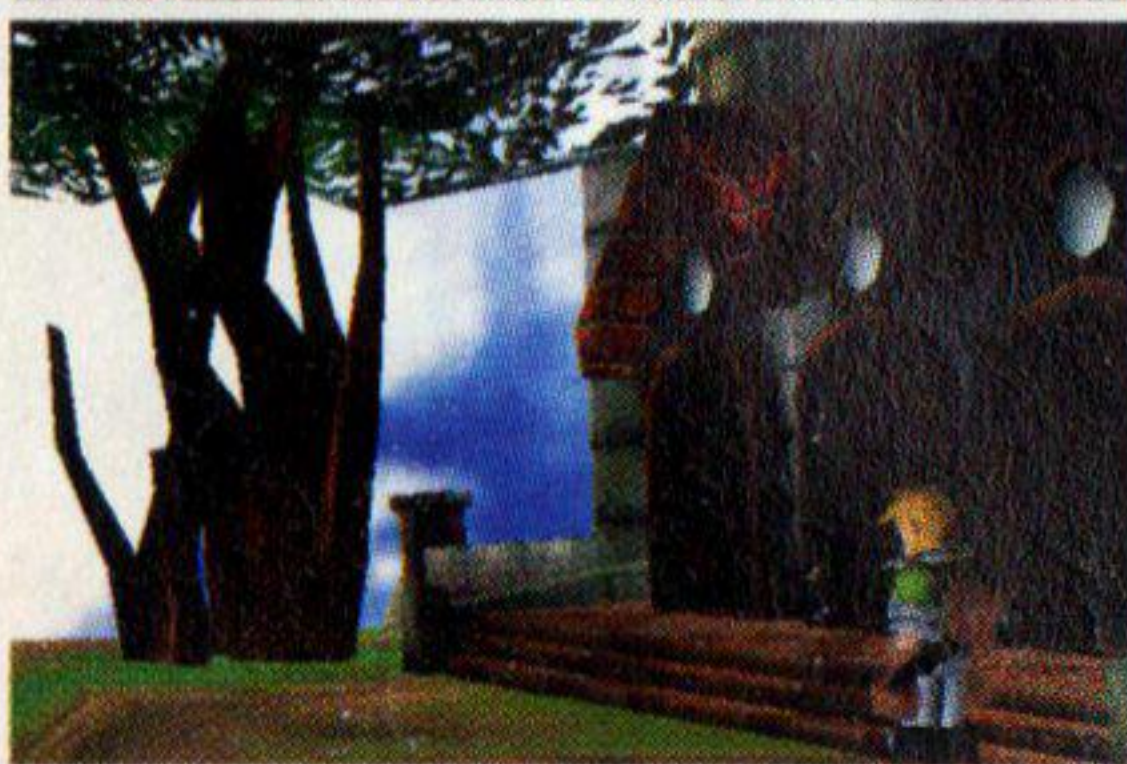
hope that the *Mario 64* sequel will be as complex. Rare is a good company, and I wish that we can make a game together some day."

Miyamoto on Luigi:

"Games will gradually evolve, thanks to strategies that make developers want to quickly continue on with their work. But how much fun will these games be? Up until now our strategy has been to make games as great looking as possible and to think things out while making the game. It's of the utmost importance to abide by this when making games. It's easy to forget this, but it's necessary when coming up with new games. These types of new inventions are the task at hand."



Climax Landers, it seems, is the **RPG** that many **Sega fans** have been **waiting for** – a **true sequel to Landstalker** and Sega's answer to Nintendo's popular *Zelda* series. Can this game **achieve** what has previously seemed impossible – **to match its five-year-old** forefather in terms of **quality**?



INFORMATION

FORMAT	Dreamcast
PUBLISHER	Sega
DEVELOPER	Climax
STYLE	RPG
RELEASE	March '99
PRICE	£TBA
VMS	Yes
ON-LINE	No

Third party Dreamcast developers, Climax have already gained a strong foothold in the RPG world with their famous action RPG *Landstalker* on the Sega Megadrive – acclaimed by many to be a *Zelda* beater – and the semi-follow-ups *LadyStalker* on Super Famicom and *Dark Saviour* on the Saturn. Climax's most recent effort was *Alundra*, a Sony PlayStation title which was eventually translated into English by US company Working Designs and released in the UK

by Psygnosis. Despite their forays onto other consoles, however, Climax have always been strong Sega supporters, with most of their products having been released on the Megadrive and Saturn. Their first Dreamcast effort, *Climax*

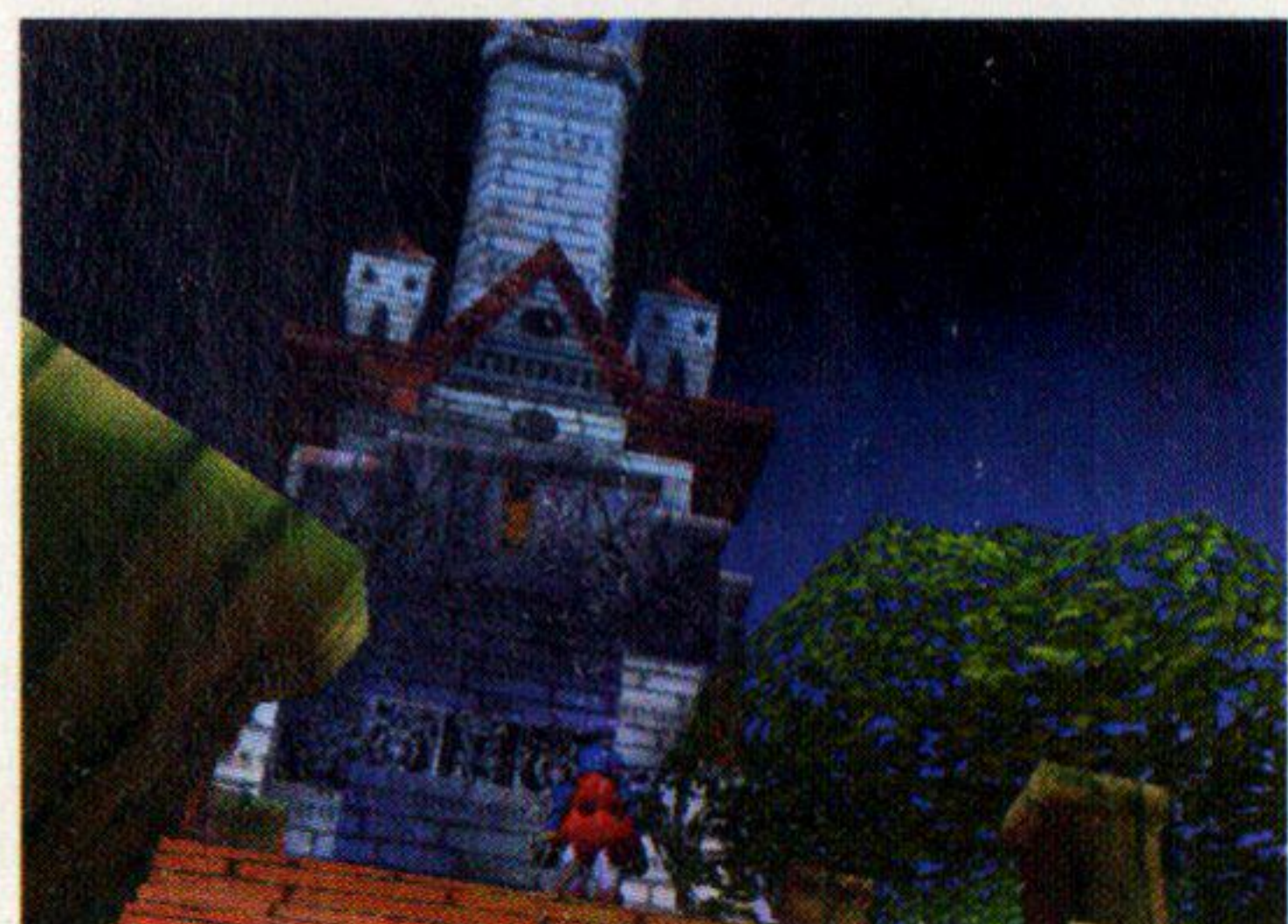
dimension. In this world, time and space wraps around itself in a constant state of transition, eras come and go in no set order, and each part of the land represents a different time zone. What this boils down to is an excuse for

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT CLIMAX LANDERS WILL BE A TOP SELLER IN JAPAN, AND THE GOOD THING IS THAT ALL CLIMAX'S PREVIOUS EFFORTS HAVE BEEN TRANSLATED

Landers is already making waves in Japan, with many gamers signed up for a purchase of the game when it hits the shelves this March.

Fans of *Landstalker* will be pleased to hear that *Climax Landers* is yet another follow-up to the Megadrive hit, as the Dreamcast title is set within the *Landstalker* world. Actually, that's not entirely accurate – the world of *Landstalker* is set within *Climax Landers*. I'll explain. In *Climax Landers* you take the role of Sword, an adventurer who sets off on a journey to discover the mysteries of another

Climax to bring their RPG hits together in one game – one area of *Climax Landers*' world being the *Landstalker* universe, with familiar characters Ryle (Nigel in the Western version) and Friday becoming part of the action. In fact, you can even switch control to play as Ryle, or even Lady from *LadyStalker*, who is also in this game. Other characters are unique to the game, however, and despite the fact that *Climax Landers* is obviously one big in-joke, there can be no doubt that it has its own storyline. The whole point of the game in fact is to discover the meaning





of the strange dimension that Sword has been plunged into, who created it and for what purpose, and ultimately to escape from it.

Action platformer? *Climax Landers* may be an RPG, but like previous installments in the Climax universe (as it will no doubt be known from now on...)

FANS OF ZELDA WILL BE PLEASED TO HEAR THAT CLIMAX LANDERS IS VERY MUCH IN THE SAME LEAGUE, RELYING ON PROBLEM SOLVING AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE GAMEPLAY

it features action-based combat. Some may argue that with the new 3D slant utilised in these games, action RPGs are merging more and more into the platformer genre, with 3D platformers using the same perspective. However, fans of *Zelda* will be pleased to hear that *Climax Landers* is very much in the same league as Nintendo's flagship RPG, relying on problem solving as an integral part of the

gameplay. This was also the case with *Landstalker*, though many people favoured that game over *Zelda* because it had a more adult approach and there were more people to talk to and more villages to explore in the gameworld. It's likely that *Climax Landers* will present a similar case, as the game will be set in a

bigger universe than *Zelda*'s Hyrule. In fact Climax boast that there are literally dozens of time periods in the game, with locations varying from medieval Europe to a fantasy version of modern day Japan. The keyword is 'random'. Within *Climax Landers* it seems that everything, with the exception of predefined villages and other important locations, will be randomised. Dungeons will be different

every time you enter them – symptomatic of the confused dimension that the game is set in. Monster attacks will also be randomised – this is unusual for an action game as monsters are usually predefined within their own areas. Some monsters will only crop up very rarely, making a meeting with them a chance occurrence.

Climax's reasoning for this surfaces in the

announcement that *Climax Landers* will be compatible with the Visual Memory unit for Dreamcast, in the sense that the game will allow you to collect monsters and train them for later use. This is very reminiscent of Nintendo's *Pocket Monsters* (*Pokémon*) series of RPGs and merchandise.

However, while *Climax Landers* may be taking a lot of direction from other famous RPGs, it seems that what we're essentially getting is a true sequel to *Landstalker* – something Sega fans have been waiting for for a long time. The obvious plagiarism can be ignored in this case. Climax are certainly heading for success with this title, as their previous efforts mark them as true masters of the action RPG genre. There can be no doubt that *Climax Landers* will be a top seller in Japan, and the good thing is that all Climax's previous efforts (with the exception of *Ladystalker* on Nintendo's Super Famicom) have been translated for Western audiences. Sega's Western divisions are yet to announce future titles beyond the initial games planned for the Dreamcast launch in the US and UK, but this is one title that is almost a certainty – Sega have never skipped over one of Climax's action RPGs before. **TC**



Climax Landers has many similarities to Nintendo's *Zelda*. The graphics, however, are far superior

MEET THE FOLKS...



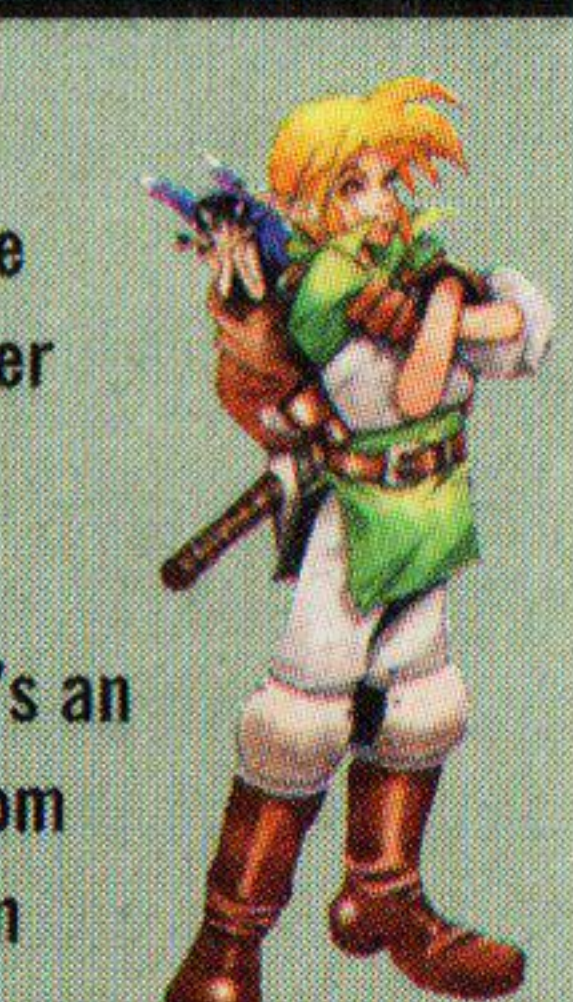
Sword - The main character, i.e. the one you will control for much of the game. Not much is known about him, except that he's a lone adventurer who seeks to discover the secrets of the lost dimension.

Ryle - It has to be said, Ryle doesn't differ much from Sword, in that he's an adventurer (i.e. he's a thief, who just happens to steal ancient relics from tombs and the like). Ryle is better known as Nigel in the West, the main character from *Landstalker* on the Sega Megadrive.



Rao - Hold that pose – haven't we seen it somewhere before? Rao's the gruff mercenary type, a character who Sword meets up with on his travels through time.

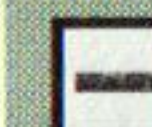
Lady - The main character from *Ladystalker*, the lacklustre 'sequel' to *Landstalker* that appeared on the Megadrive in Japan. Here's hoping she turns out to be Sword's love interest.



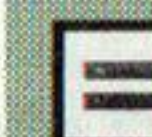
SUMMING UP



- A true sequel to *Landstalker*... at last.
- Climax certainly know what they are doing, and *Climax Landers* will be yet another excellent *Zelda*-style game for fans of this genre. There's not been a Climax RPG as good as *Landstalker* to date.



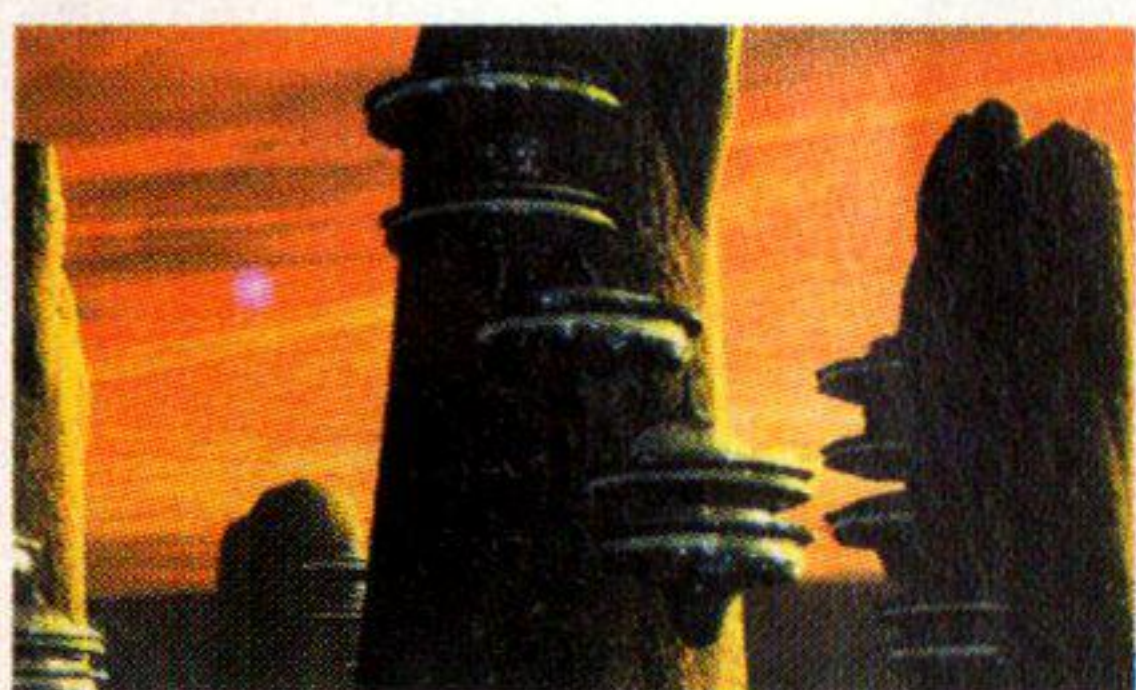
- This game will be comparatively old by the time the Dreamcast is released in the UK. Hopefully this won't stop Sega considering a translation.



Perhaps the second most highly anticipated RPG on Dreamcast – *Grandia 2* being the first.

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

Civilization II is hailed by many PC owners as the best game ever. On any system. This new game from Sid Meier promises to be even more epic in scope.



INFORMATION

PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER	Fraxis Games
STYLE	Turn-based God Game
RELEASE	Spring '99
PRICE	£34.99
PLAYERS	1-6
PROCESSOR	P166
MEMORY	32MB
DISK SPACE	85MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

Sid Meier is famous for his in-depth, challenging and yet completely absorbing turn-based strategy games that often cover no less than the entire evolution of civilisations, and even mankind, far off into the distant future. From *Sim City* and his war sims through to the *Civilization* games, Sid has consistently managed to develop titles that threaten to take over people's lives with their addictive and absorbing god-gameplay. Many people have been wondering just how Sid Meier can ever hope to better *Civilization II* and the level of depth it contained, covering almost every imaginable facet of human life from technology and resource gathering down to simple things like entertaining your peoples or their standard of living. Now Sid has set his sights further afield than

Earth, and *Alpha Centauri* threatens to be his most epic game yet.

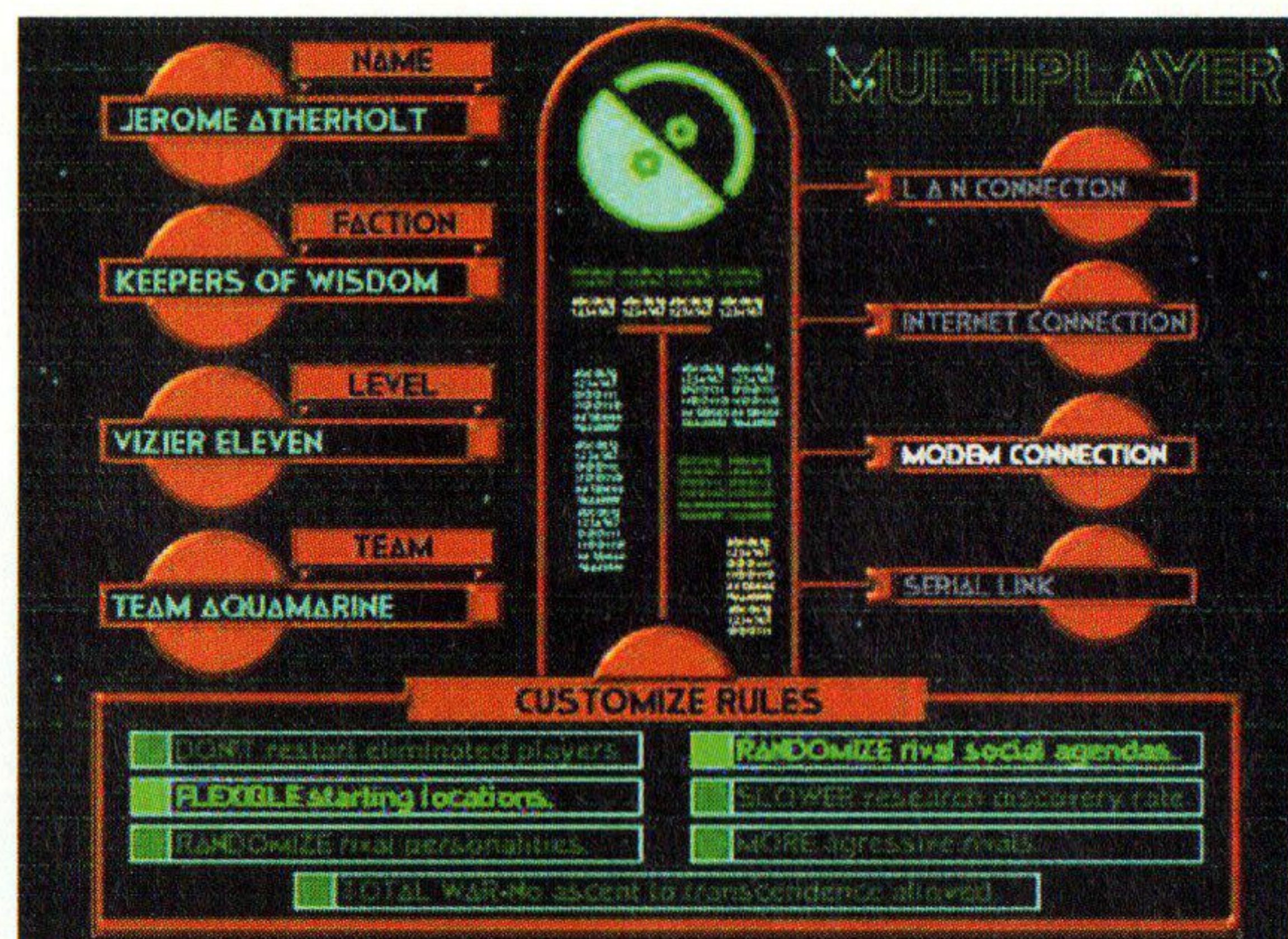
Man's first steps

The game's story stems from the apparent demise of mankind on Earth in the distant future and a last effort to colonise the stars to ensure the survival of our race. This mission goes wrong though, and a mutiny on the UN ship sees seven different factions, each with their own ideologies, abandoning the ship and settling on the planet of Alpha Centauri. From this point you take over and control one of the factions from their first landing on the planet through to the end of the game. You'll start off with just a colony base that crash lands on the planet. From this you can set about establishing your faction on the planet,

before you inevitably meet the others. To start with you'll have very basic 22nd Century technology and can only build a few vehicles with limited armaments or abilities. Once you've explored the surrounding area, you can then gather resources, develop technologies and generally set out on the long road of evolution. What can't be put across accurately is how closely you can control ever facet of your people's lives. You can use vehicles called Formers to manipulate the land and terra-form it, making the ground suitable for woodland or farming, before you can harvest these resources. The more of these that you gather, as well as the amount of alien artefacts that you can find, the quicker you can develop new technologies. As would be expected from a Sid Meier

game, though, it's ultimately more complicated than that, and *Alpha Centauri* promises to develop in both depth and complexity as more technologies are developed and your people embark on a certain evolutionary path. You can obviously develop your military weapons and vehicles, but you can also improve your ability to explore the planet, mine resources, harness the power of the elements, as well as your scientific abilities (which will have an effect on later development) – the list of options is literally endless.

Luckily, though, the game will feature an in-built tour that guides you around most of the options, menus and commands you're presented with. This helps you to get started and eventually, as you start to expand your territory, any new life forms or whatever you come across will be explained automatically. This will certainly help any newcomers to get into this game, as well as provide a nice way for experienced Sid Meier players to get into his latest effort, as this is apparently much more than a possible *Civilization III*. Certainly the



aggressive policy against your rivals. In the greatest tradition of Sid Meier games, though, even this aspect will be far more involved than even your average game based on politics. You can either declare war or remain on more friendly terms, which can allow you to then exchange scientific knowledge. Once you've managed to establish communications, either good or bad, with the other factions, you'll then be able to meet on the global council. It's in this aspect of

council members. The level of depth to this game promises to be quite amazing.

What else do you need?

It's in this area that you will be able to pursue one of two possible paths through the game. You can choose to conquer the world by force and destroy the other factions, or choose to control the council and peacefully try to attain the Ascent to Transcendence where humanity is taken

onto the next step in evolution. This game will certainly provide a long-term

challenge and promises to be completely addictive in the short-term. There will be multiplayer options for up to six people, the maps will be randomly generated with each new go, there are five levels of AI ability and it's been claimed that as you progress in the game you'll discover some quite shocking facts about the planet itself that could affect the outcome of your game – is the planet actually a living organism? *Alpha Centauri* certainly promises much, not only to fans of Sid's games, but anyone whose got a hankering for a game that will last them a lifetime. Whether it's good enough to warrant this claim remains unknown until next month's review. **TC**

SUMMING UP



- The level of depth is stunning – there's hours of play in here.
- The first game to truly deserve the title 'God game'?



- The graphics are a little on the poor side.
- A little too daunting for those uninitiated in Sid Meier games?



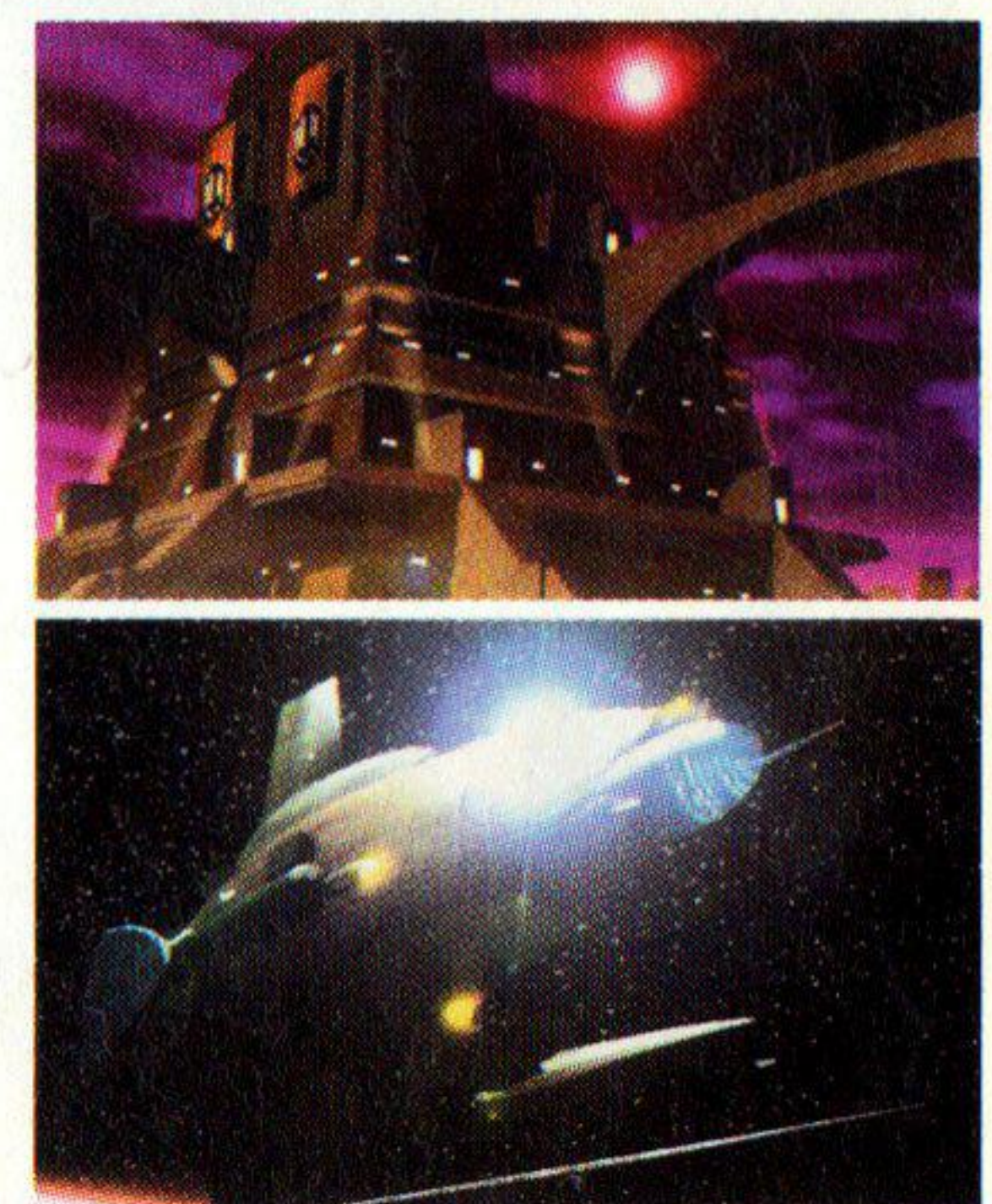
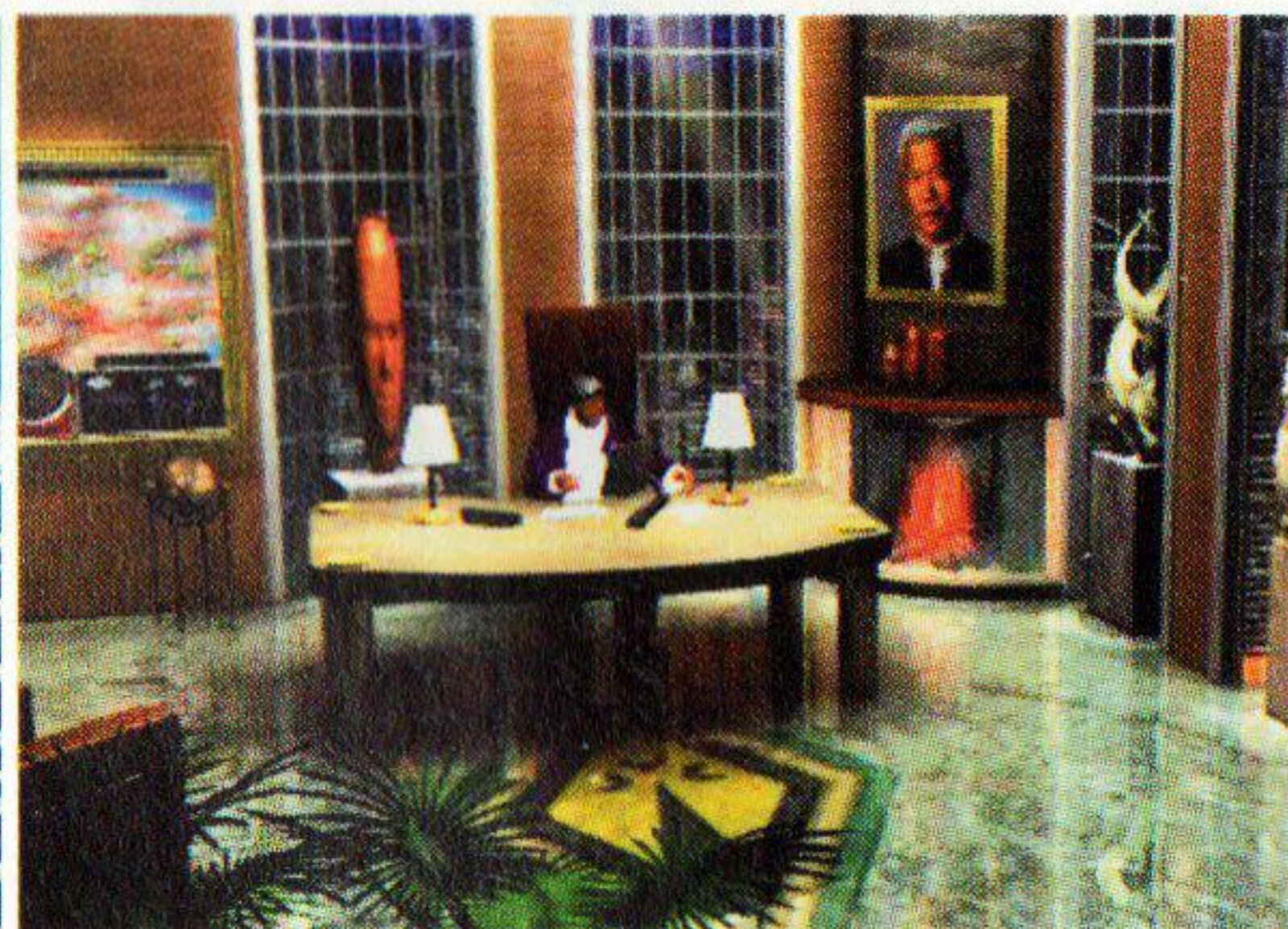
The game Sid fans have been waiting for since *Civ II*, but perhaps too much for anyone else.

FROM SIM CITY AND HIS WAR SIMS THROUGH TO THE CIVILIZATION GAMES, SID HAS CONSISTENTLY MANAGED TO DEVELOP TITLES THAT THREATEN TO TAKE OVER PEOPLE'S LIVES

graphical style will be similar to these games, although much better in quality, but this game goes far deeper than anything Sid has attempted before.

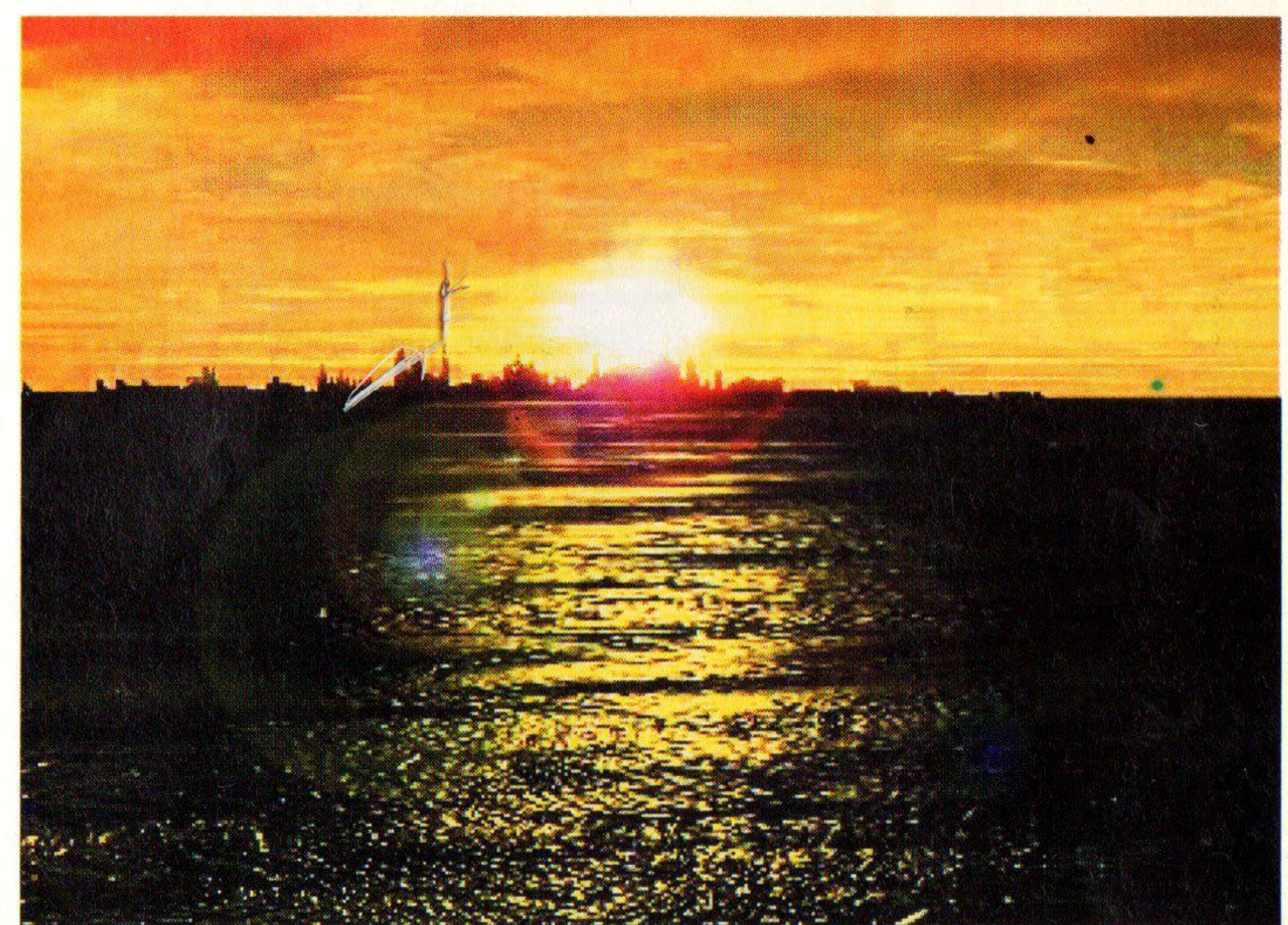
As you expand your territories, you'll come into contact with the other factions. *Alpha Centauri* will offer the player the option to pursue either a peaceful or

the game that you'll find your previous decisions and policies coming back to haunt you. If you've acted aggressively towards other leaders or broken treaties, you'll find it very difficult to gain any allies on this council. This means that when you try to push forward an idea you won't get any support from other

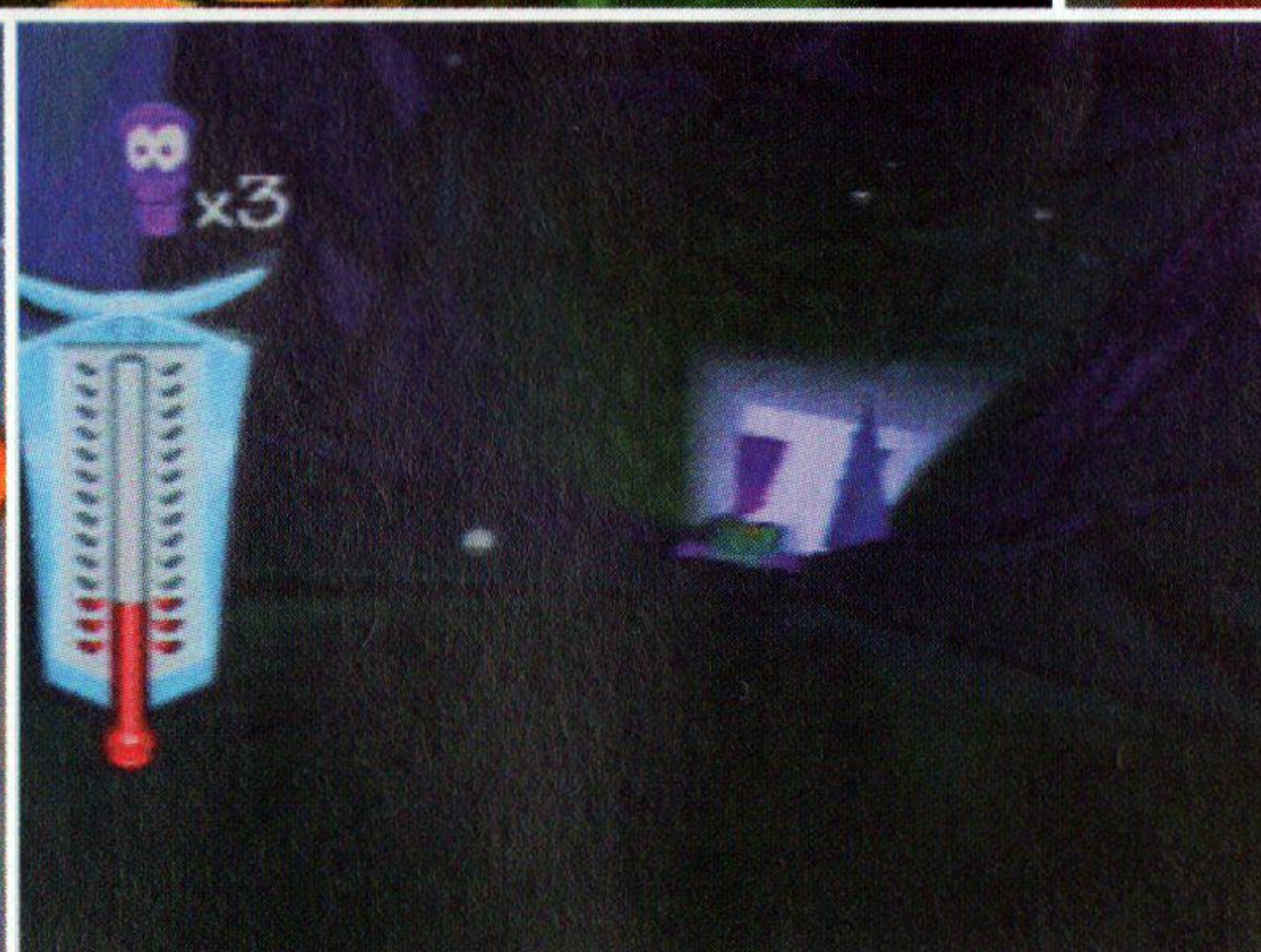
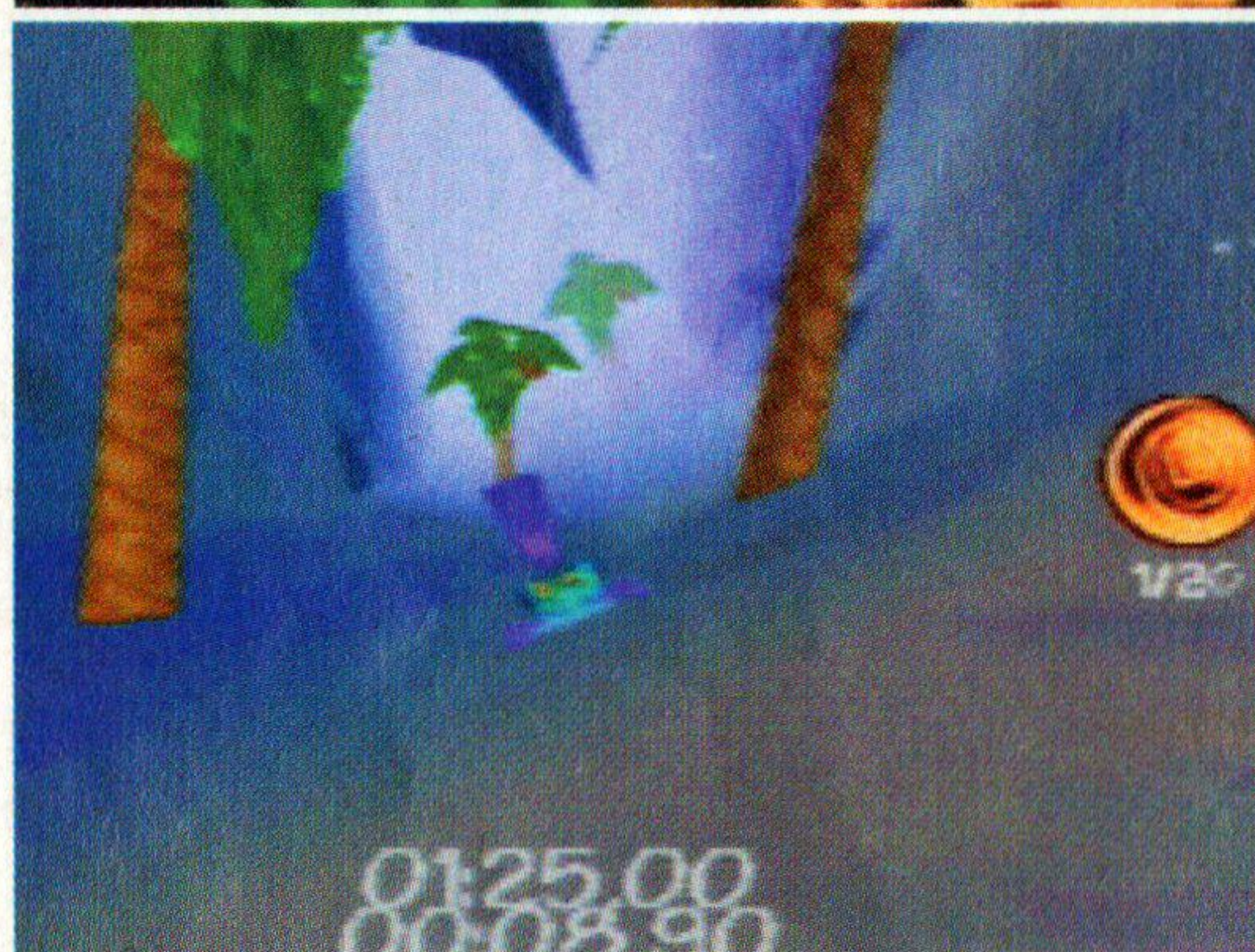


BUILDING BETTER WORLDS

The maps in *Alpha Centauri* will be instantly familiar to fans of Sid Meier's *Civilization* games, being made up of square blocks in an isometric viewpoint. One of the main differences will be in the size of the maps in this new game, which will cover an entire planet and can range from a small planet up to an enormous game map. This will allow for far greater scope in the scale and depth of your colonies.



Though the graphics are nothing spectacular, they do have their moments



Tonic Trouble

Tonic Trouble will be **Ubisoft's** next bite at the **platform cherry**, and **luckily** for us, it seems that the game is **shaping up very nicely** indeed.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	Nintendo 64
PUBLISHER	Ubisoft
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Platformer
RELEASE	March '99
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	One
RUMBLE PAK	Yes
MEMORY PAK	Yes
EXPANSION PAK	Yes

There are many that blame all of the troubles in the world today on Saddam Hussain. Seeing as he is a tyrannical dictator who tests horrific chemical weapons on inhabited villages on the outskirts of his country, this is surely fair enough. However, there are many more who blame all of the troubles on drinks containing fermented yeast. Surely that's out of line? At the time of writing, however, it is the festive holiday season, and like every year at this time, the drink-driving campaign is in full effect, serving as a reminder that those who are irresponsible whilst in a mind state altered by alcohol can do some horrific things. That said, shocking as this may

be, it is nothing compared to the actions of a little alien fella named Ed...

On me 'Ed, son!

You see, whilst cruisin' around the Earth in his spaceship, Ed was enjoying a bit of a tippie. In fact he got so inebriated that he spilt his drink – all over Earth to be exact – and since alien drink is (obviously) far more powerful than what we are used to (although nothing compared to absinthe), it altered the chemical and biological functions of our planet quite drastically. All of a sudden, rivers started flowing backwards, carrots became hostile tooth-ridden monsters and Harry Hill ceased to be funny – a nightmare indeed. To make things worse,

a nasty piece of work called Grogh The Hellish decides that this is the moment when he will take control of Earth. Oh – and indeed – dear... Ed, being a responsible alien, of course decided that he would sort the whole thing out. And this is where you come in, controlling Ed in Ubisoft's upcoming platform adventure, *Tonic Trouble*.

If you glance at the screenshots, you could not be blamed for thinking that *Tonic Trouble* is in fact another upcoming Ubisoft platform adventure, *Rayman 2*. Indeed the games seem very similar at first – the main characters both have a deficiency in the limb and joint area, with feet and hands dangling seemingly in thin air.

WELCOME TO THE MADHOUSE!

Tonic Trouble features a variety of insane characters, from a sad Viking to a sick mammoth with a pilot's licence and the maniacal man-eating mushrooms you see here!



Both games have a similar cartoony feel, and one of the levels even runs on the *Rayman 2* engine, so UbiSoft can promote that game through this one. Rayman even makes a guest appearance! UbiSoft are quick to assure us that *Tonic Trouble* is a very different game, though, with many different playing styles and objectives.

You've come a long way, baby

It has to be said that the game appeared quite unspectacular at E3

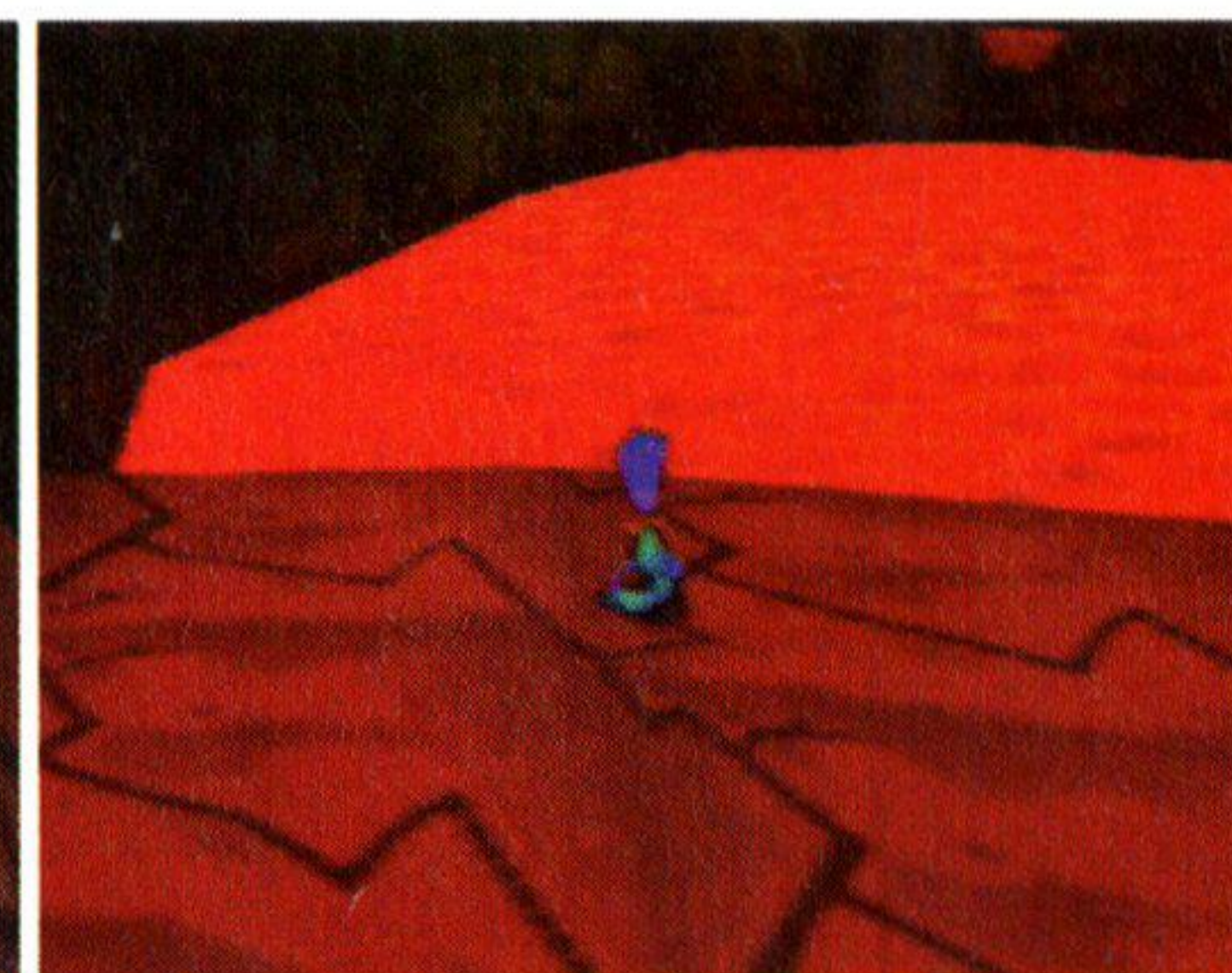
The visuals showcase some new ideas in terms of design, looking like a cross between *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Starshot* (like *Starshot*, *Tonic Trouble* is being developed in France), and it is technically starting to look very impressive. The worlds are garishly coloured and alive with vivid detail and strange characters, whilst the textures are rich and sharp, thankfully straying away from the N64's blur filters that you will find in many games. The fifteen worlds in the game include a CD-worshipping village (!), a desert of

CHARACTERS ARE QUITE STRANGE, AND INCLUDE AN INJURED WOOLLY MAMMOTH WITH A PILOT'S LICENCE, GUARDS WHO CAN FLY AFTER INHALING HELIUM,

and ECTS last year, looking too much like it was just another *Banjo* wannabe that was going get lost in the N64 shuffle. The animation and control were frighteningly bad and the frame rate was horrible. Luckily, when we played the updated code, however, it was obvious that there had been some significant improvements made. The frame rate is now far smoother, and the game also boosts some impressive new animation routines.

upside-down pyramids and an Atlantis-like underwater world. The sound is also of a high quality, with the weird and wonderful spot effects and musical scores that we have come to expect from the French.

The characters are likewise quite strange, and they include an injured woolly mammoth with a pilot's licence, guards who can fly after inhaling helium, and a snail that commands an army of animals!

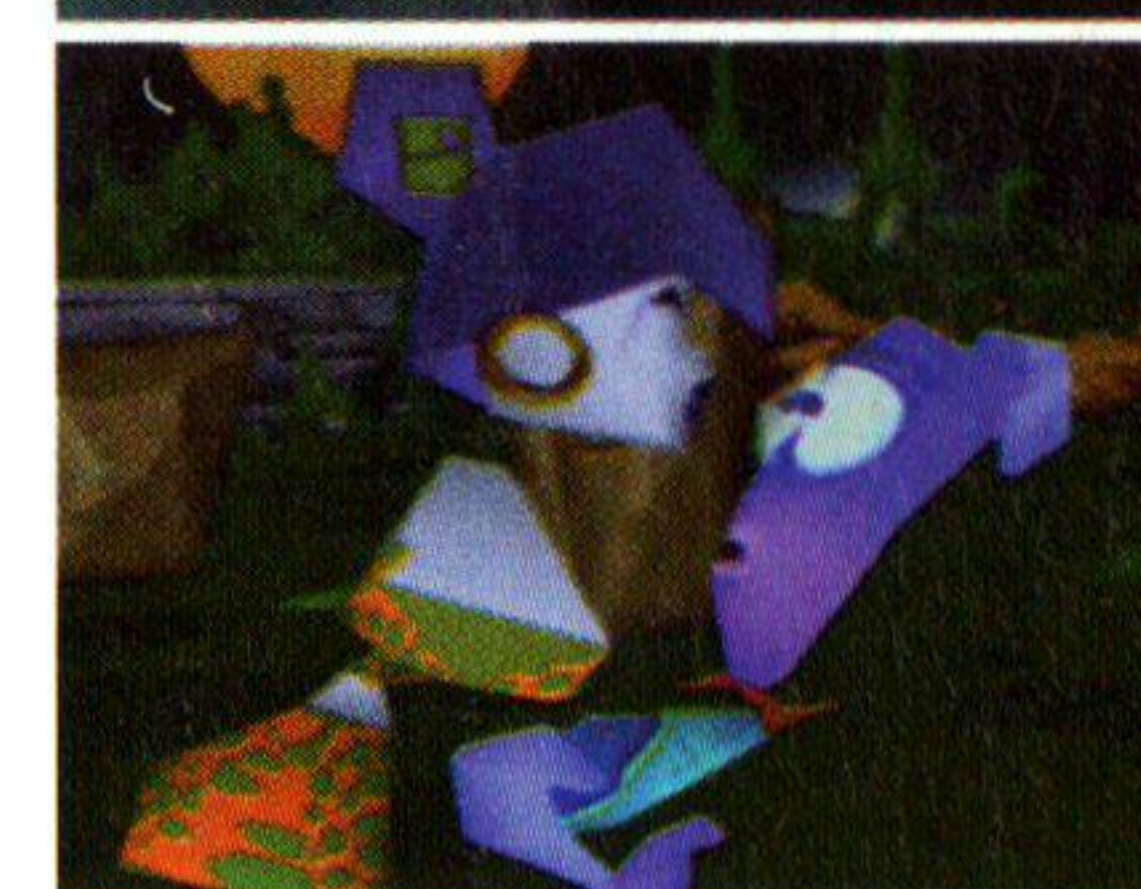
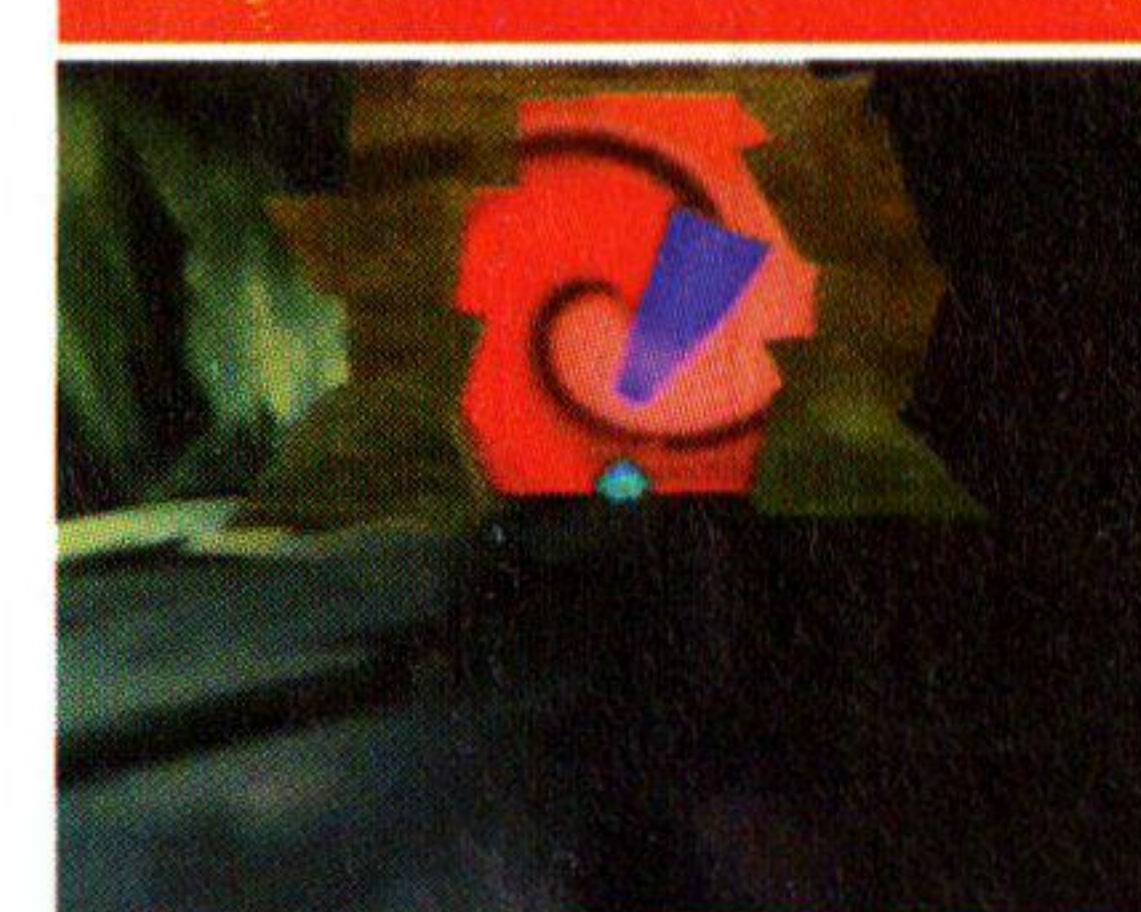


A thing of many talents.

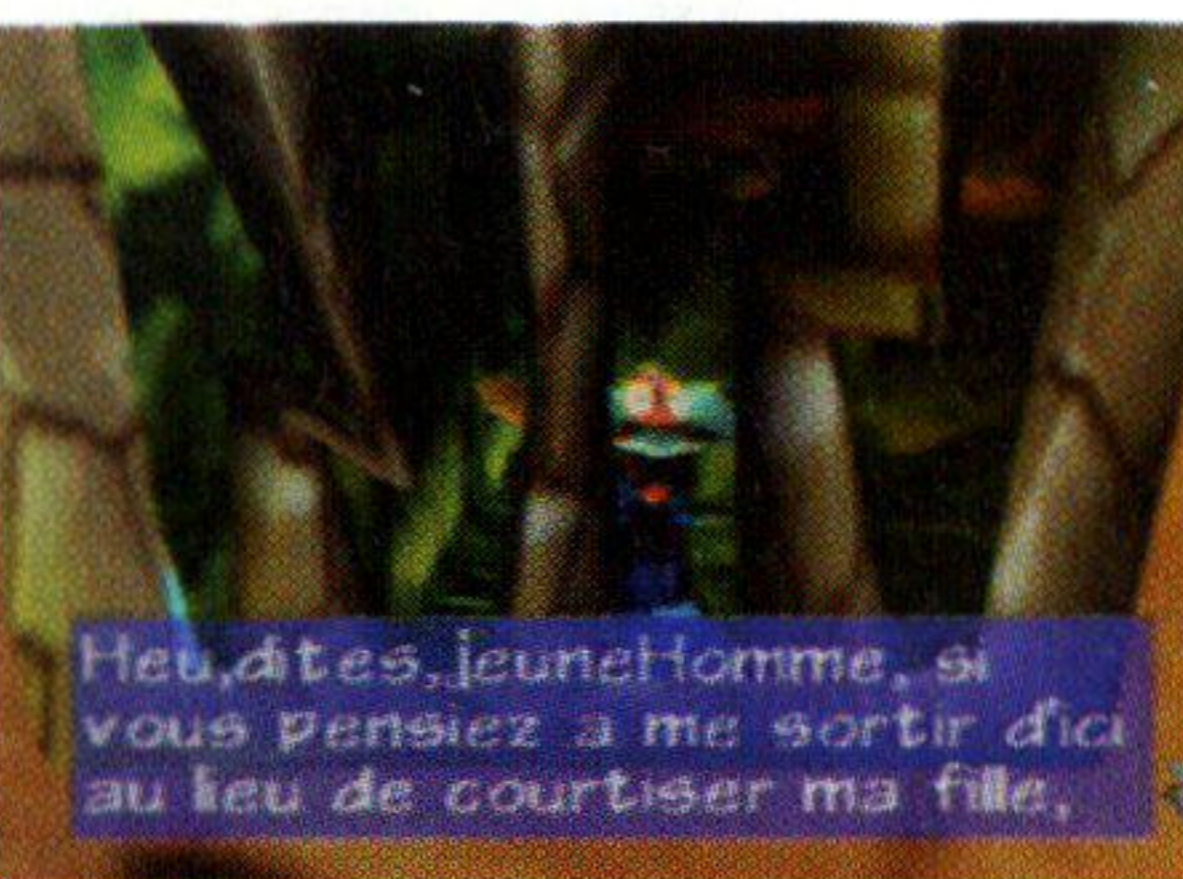
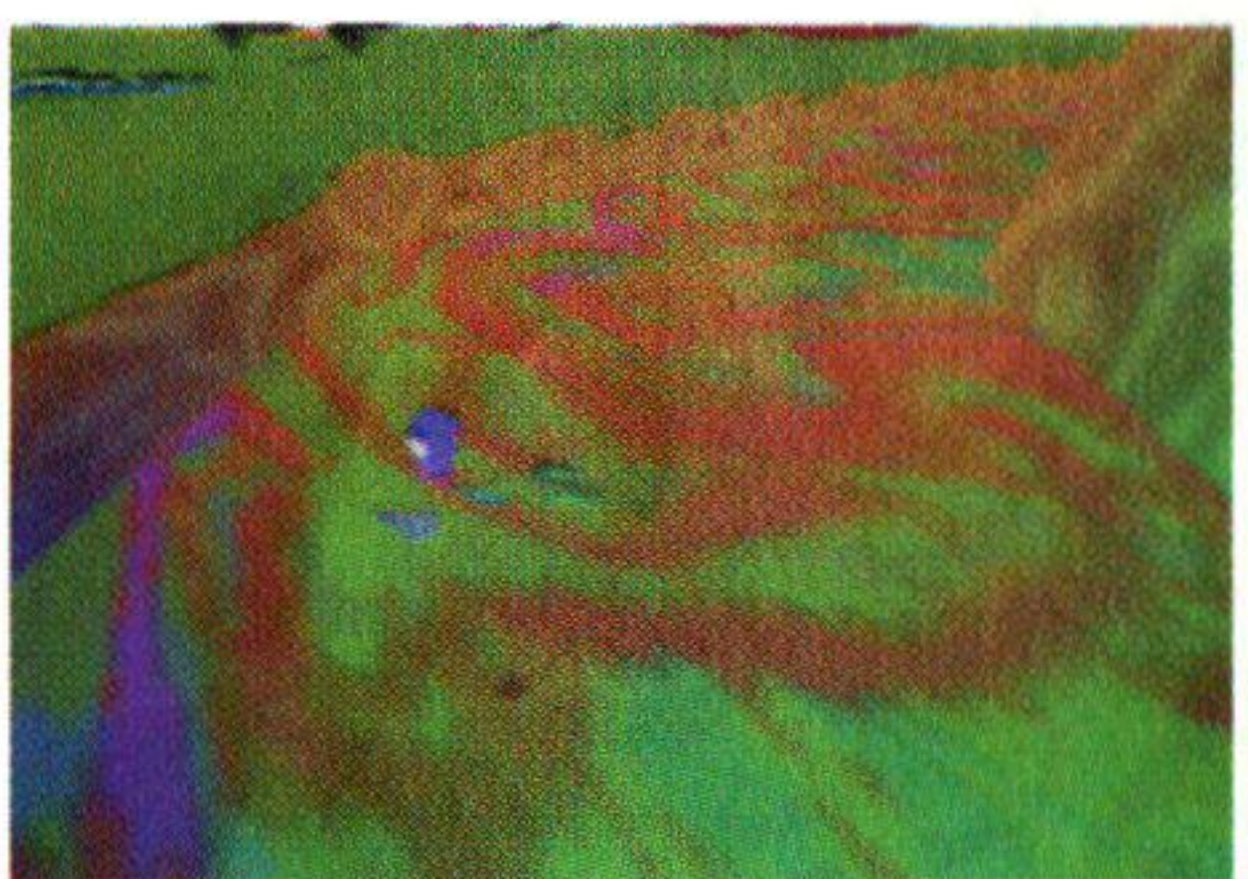
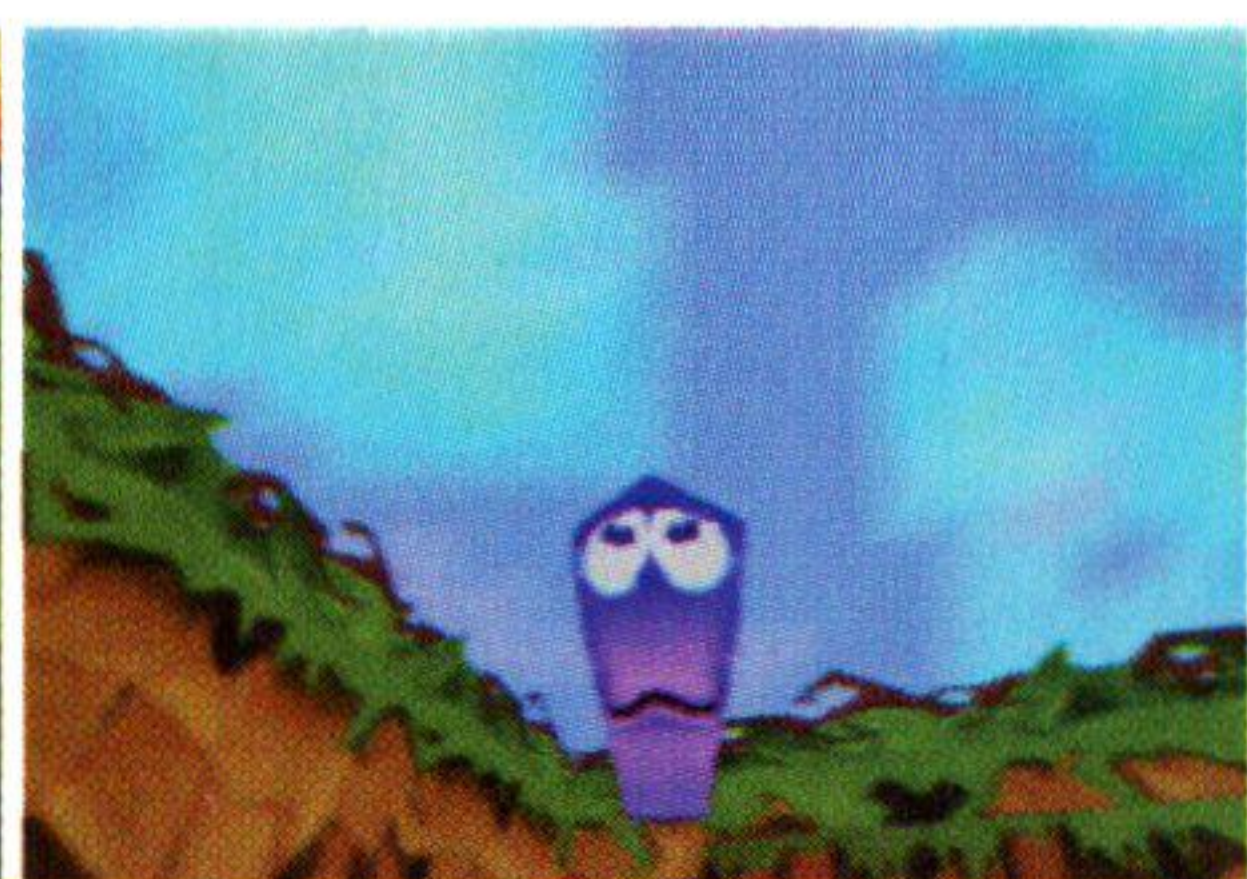
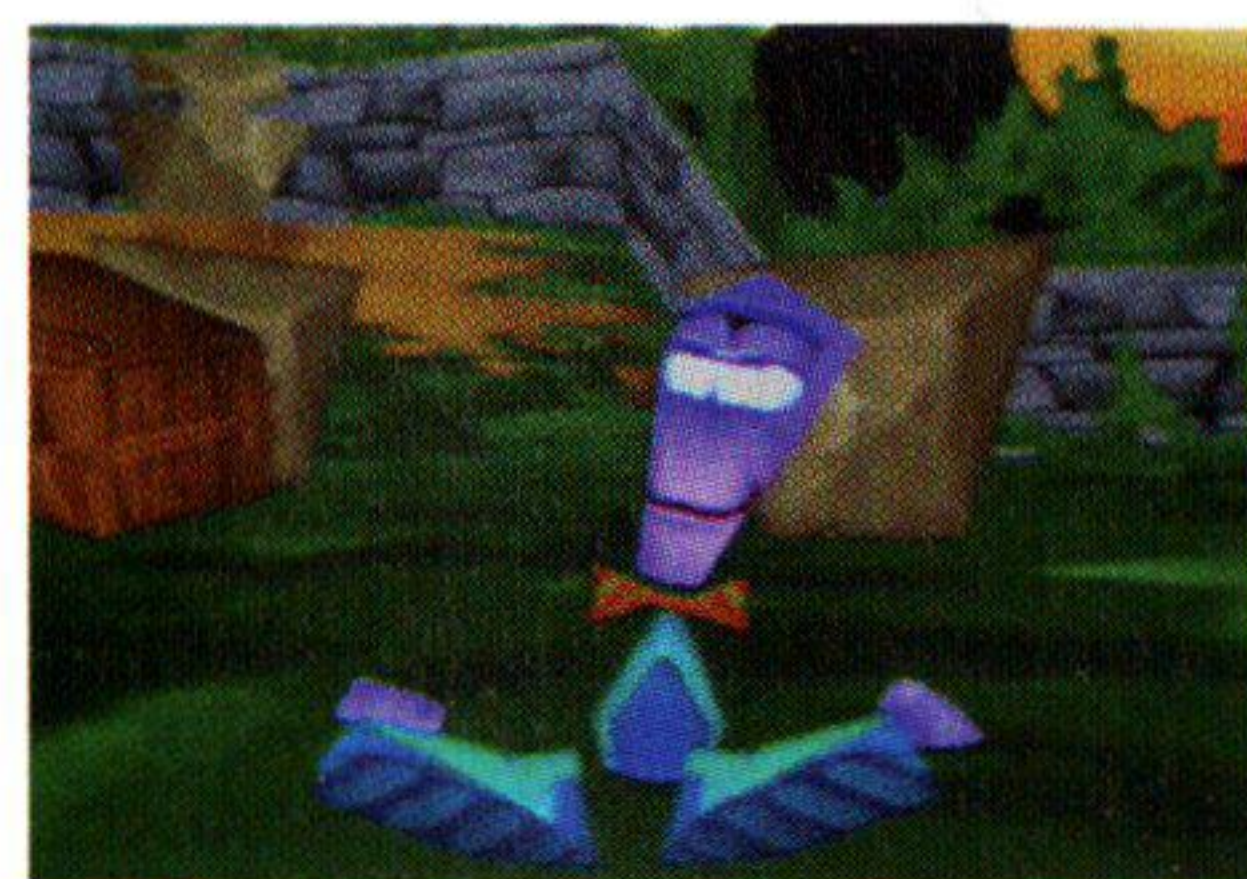
Like any of his platforming cousins, Ed can run and jump, swim on or under water, crawl, hang onto walls, fly, manipulate objects in a variety of ways, climb up and down ropes, and even don one of several disguises. He also brandishes a magical stick, which he is taught how to use by a hippy samurai, and a dangerous bow-tie which is his most useful weapon. He must use these powers to make his way through the aforementioned strange worlds in levels involving platforms, sled races and flying sections. The sled race level, as mentioned earlier, showcases the *Rayman 2* engine and, bizarrely enough, is very similar to the best of

the Dreamcast launch games, one *Pen Pen Trilcelon*.

The game still needs quite a bit of tweaking, but UbiSoft are promising a solid 60 fps frame rate, more characters on screen than in any other game, CD quality sound and a multiplayer mode of some description. Let's all hope they put the time into it, as it will need to be something quite special to compete with the N64's army of quality platform adventures. **TC**



Ed has many weird and wonderful adventures on his quest to stop Grogg the Hellish



Ed the Alien is a character with lots of charm and plenty of talents, from sledging downhill to chatting up the ladys

SUMMING UP

- +** *Tonic Trouble* is starting to look pretty lovely.
- Loads of inventive new ideas, and a great little character in Ed, rarely seen in video games.
- It's a tough genre to compete in, where even great little games like *Starshot* fall down in the face of competition like *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Mario 64*.
- Does seem a bit too similar to *Rayman 2* to the casual punter.

Could be special if the game is not rushed to beat the likes of *Conker's Quest* to the N64.



Shinki Sekai Evolution

Evolution is the first **RPG** for Sega's new machine, but coming from a relatively **little-known company**, can it **achieve the status** of games such as **Grandia 2** from GameArts? **Sting** seem to have everything **staked on it...**

INFORMATION

FORMAT	Dreamcast
PUBLISHER	Sega
DEVELOPER	Sting/ESP
STYLE	RPG
RELEASE	Jan '99
PRICE	£TBA
VMS	Yes
ON-LINE	Yes

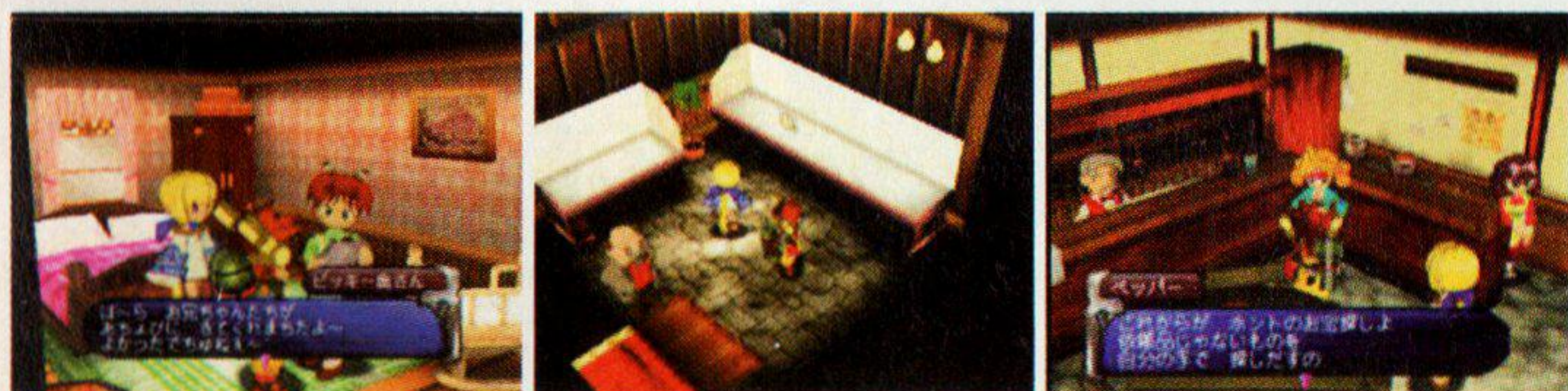
Hailing from Sting, a company little known in the RPG field, *Shinki Sekai Evolution* is the first 3D RPG for the Dreamcast, due out this January in Japan. The title, which it has to be said bears more than a slight resemblance to that of famous anime series Shin Seikai Evangelion, translates as 'God Machine World Evolution', which may sound a bit daft but is surprisingly apt.

The gameworld is based in a 1930s-style fantasy environment, which its creators admit is based heavily on the

Indiana Jones movies. In the game you play the part of 16-year-old Mag Launcher, the only son in his household, who sets out on a journey of discovery in order to live up to his parents' expectations. Along the way he meets a mysterious girl named Linia Cannon, who doesn't speak. Together they stumble on the ruins of an ancient civilisation, and discover the Cyframe technology which gives them holy powers brought about by cybernetic abilities. Accompanying Mag through much of the journey is his mentor Gre Nade, an old servant of his parents who is also a competent adventurer, and Mag's rival Chain Gun, a 15-year-old girl who is always causing trouble for him. The adventure they embark on takes them to the gates of Heaven itself... Silly Japanese blurb done with, let's concentrate on the actual game.

Cinema interactive

Evolution is described as a cinematic role-playing adventure – not cinematic in the sense of having a glut of cut scenes, but in every essence working like a real-time movie in terms of story and perspective. Sting expect their product to appeal to everyone from child to adult, which is somewhat surprising given the age of the main protagonists. However, if *Evolution* can repeat the success of *Grandia* – GameArts' famous 3D RPG for the Saturn that had two children as its main characters – Sting will certainly win respect in the role-playing world. *Evolution* is a similar game, concentrating on the rediscovery of ancient technology with mystical properties. It's a fact, though, that many RPG titles have been announced



COMIC TEASER

Sting are keen to promote their new RPG, even releasing a short manga based on the exploits of the main characters. This is only available to those with Web access, but there can be no doubt that if the game proves to be popular, printed efforts will surface in Japanese bookshops. Here's a short excerpt (reading from right to left) showing our heroes discovering a new domain to be explored.



for the Dreamcast purely on the strength of *Grandia* – the sequel to which was recently revealed in one Japanese magazine to be the most anticipated upcoming Dreamcast product in Japan.

Evolution is a strategy-based game like *Final Fantasy*, but in this case the dungeons will be randomised, meaning that every time you enter them, new areas will be encountered and new treasures will be there for the taking. This is a similar approach to that which Climax are taking with their new

obscured by some part of the scenery, or walking into obstacles you can't actually see. From the screenshots released by Sting, it looks as if the combat will take place on the same screen as the exploration, meaning there will be no cut-away battle section. We hope this to be the case, as pauses in the action can detract from the atmosphere of a 3D RPG. *Evolution* may utilise standard RPG combat, but the weapons differ from the norm in that the characters in the game can utilise the holy Cyberframe

STING ARE VERY PROUD OF THEIR 3D ENGINE, WHICH THEY SAY WILL WORK COMPLETELY IN HARMONY WITH THE ACTIONS OF THE PLAYER

action RPG *Climax Landers*, leaving people wondering whether this will be a new trend with Dreamcast games. Every aspect of the game will be presented in full, real-time 3D. Sting are very proud of their 3D engine, which they say will work completely in harmony with the actions of the player.

Closed circuit TV

An intuitive camera system has been utilised, with camera angles changing at all times to overcome those tricky situations now typical of 3D games, whereby you find your character

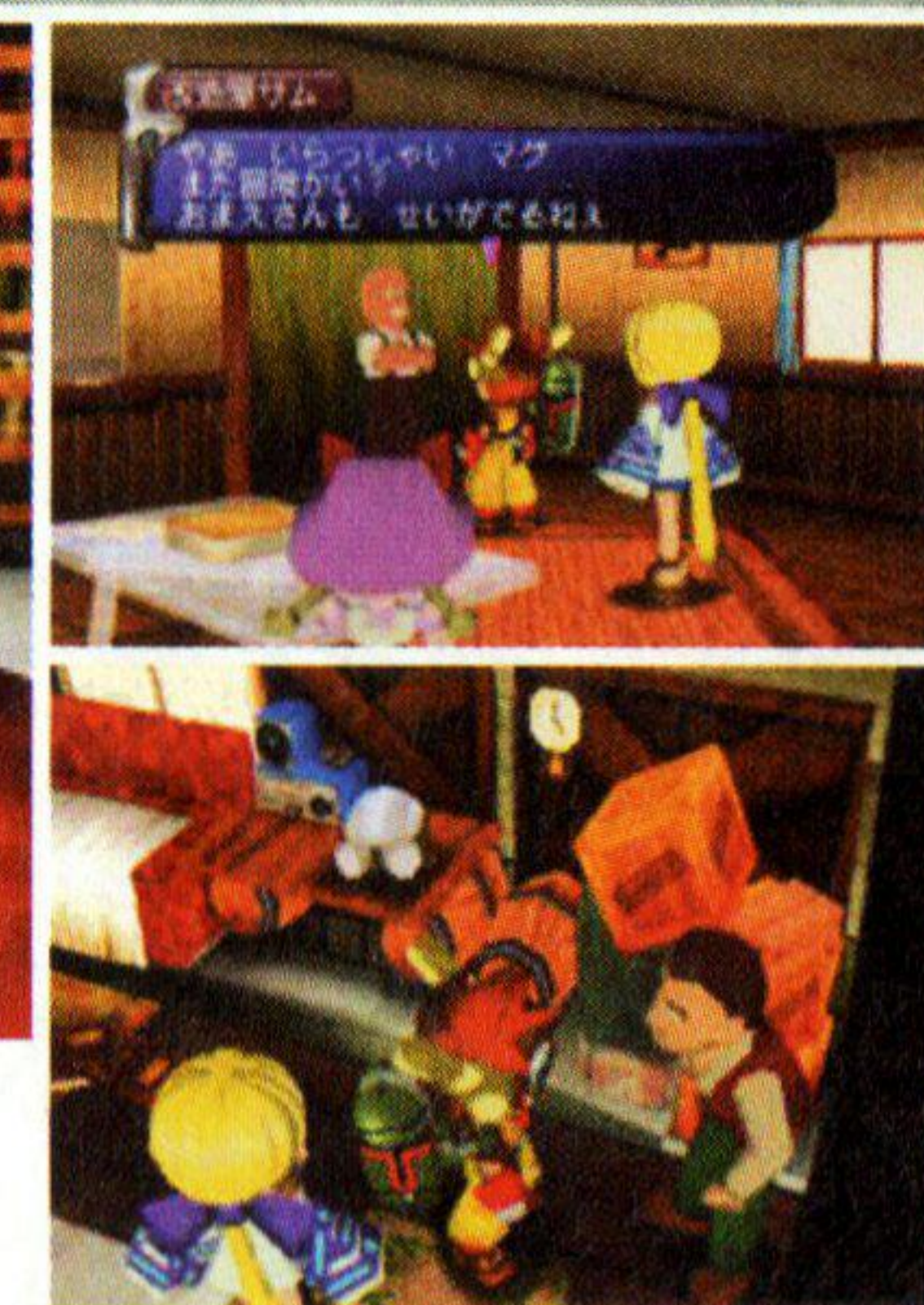
technology to gain cybernetic additions – weapons and armour that will evolve as the game progresses.

Sting may have a lot to prove on the Dreamcast, vying as they are with prolific RPG developers such as GameArts, Climax and, indeed, Sega themselves. However, *Evolution* is shaping up to be a highly impressive looking game – though whether these credentials apply to the story and actual gameplay has yet to be seen. *Evolution* is on the list of highly anticipated titles for Dreamcast, but that has a lot to do with the fact that a) this is an RPG, and therefore most



RPG fans are looking forward to it anyway, and b) with Dreamcast titles as yet thin on the ground, people are keen to buy every decent title they can get their hands on. There's no doubt that *Shinki Sekai Evolution* will be at the very least a decent game, as where RPGs are concerned it's usually obvious before release whether or not the game will be a dud, due mainly to the emphasis on story in these games.

Sting have put many months of design into *Evolution*, as you can see from the pictures accompanying this feature. Let's hope that the quality of the design work and the central premise is indicative of the game as a whole. Given the scale of this project, it would be a shame if *Evolution* turned out to be another also-ran, as is the case with most early RPGs on any new console. **TC**

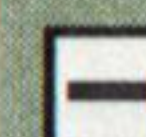


Both internal and external locations benefit from the Dreamcast's power

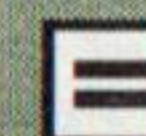
SUMMING UP



• The first 'real' RPG on Dreamcast. Enough to put this company firmly in the limelight. An original premise and bold colourful graphics seem to point toward a quality title.

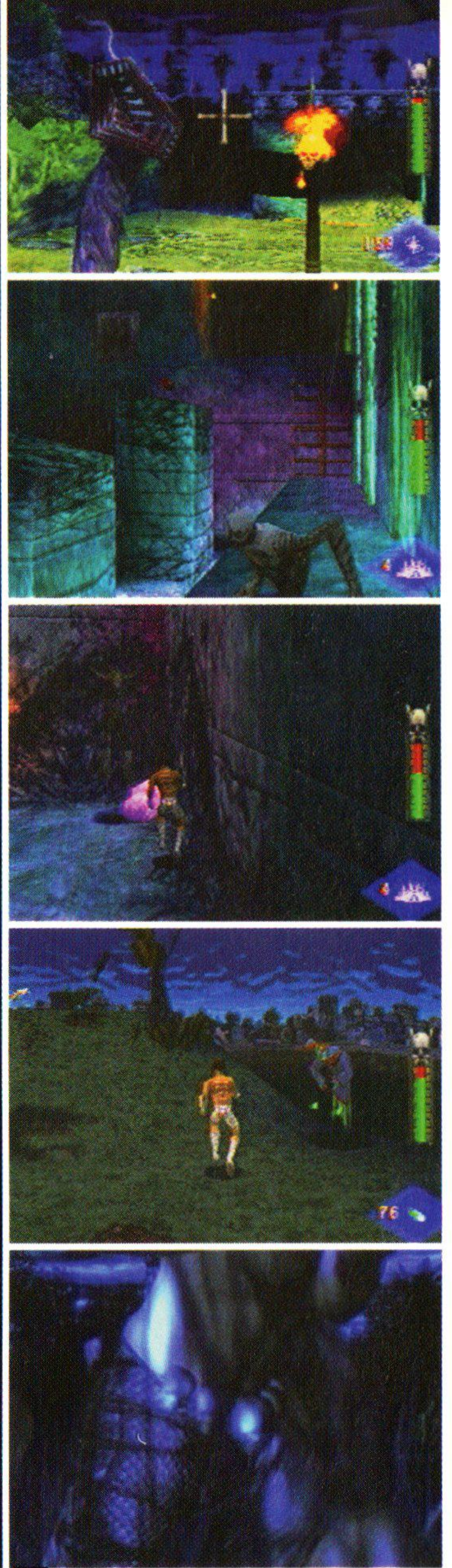


• The 3D graphics aren't too faithful to the designwork for this game, and the Dreamcast is possibly capable of better. The combat style looks dated, despite the innovative cybernetic tools.



This is a title that's going to be popular in Japan, whether it's any good or not. Licensing team ESP are at the helm, however, and they certainly know their RPGs.





Akuji the Heartless

After **Tomb Raider III**, Eidos are applying the **finishing touches** to their next **promising foray** into the **third-person adventure** genre.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Eidos
DEVELOPER	Crystal Dynamics
STYLE	Action Adventure
RELEASE	February
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	One
ANALOGUE	Yes
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block



With *Tomb Raider III* now out of the way, the pressure has been taken off many of the forthcoming third-person adventure games. Eidos now have the chance to safely release two new third-person adventure games, both of which come

from the same developer. *Akuji the Heartless* and *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*, both from Crystal Dynamics, share a lot in common – each is set in a dark underworld of sorts and features a revenge-themed plot. It will be interesting to see which comes out on top.

Heart of gold

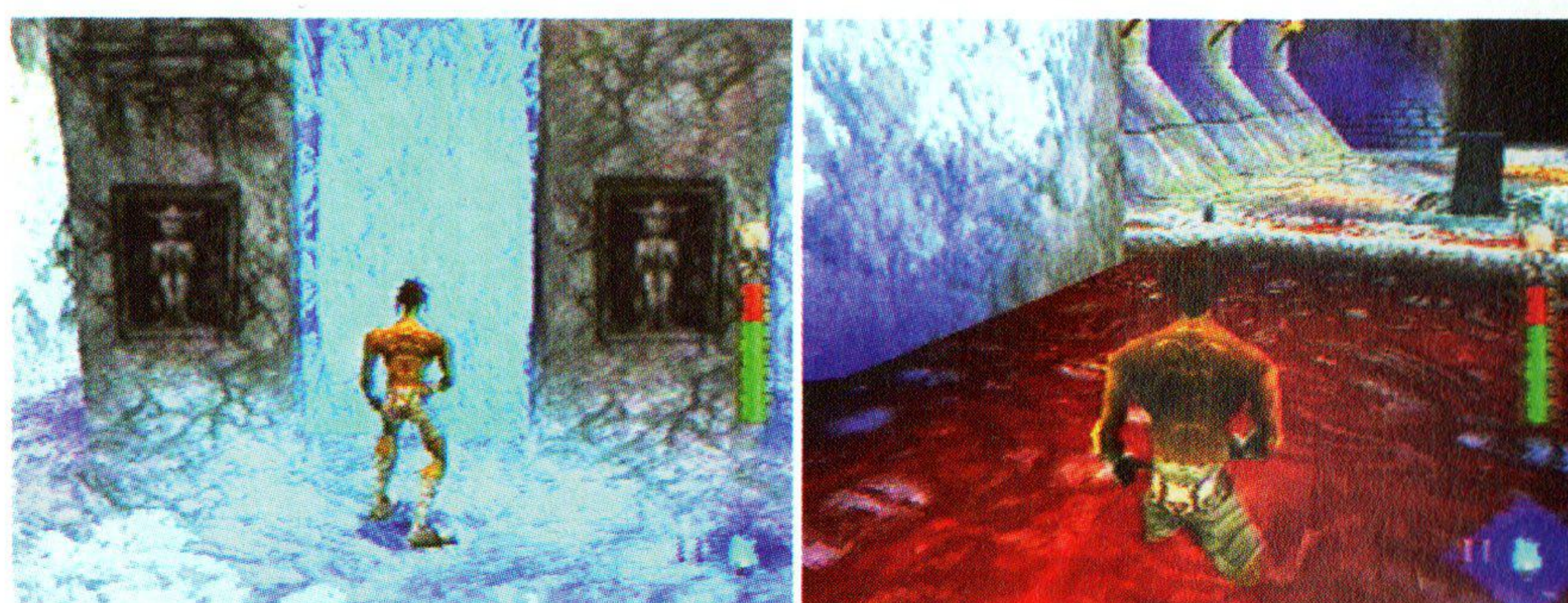
In the land of Mamora, your father sought to secure a lasting peace by arranging a marriage between you (Akuji) and a member of the rival Tanko tribe. But your brother Orad, a powerful voodoo priest, saw otherwise



Above: A few scenes from the unsettling intro sequence. It depicts the voodoo ritual that sees the removal of Akuji's heart

HEART-SHAPED BOXES

Third-person adventure games generally have quite a strong following on every gaming platform. It seems that Eidos have played their marketing cards exceptionally well recently – we've already seen the success of *Tomb Raider III*, and over a space of about six months we'll see *Akuji* and then *Soul Reaver*, both of which look set to score very highly indeed. All of this in a period with very little sign of any other competition.



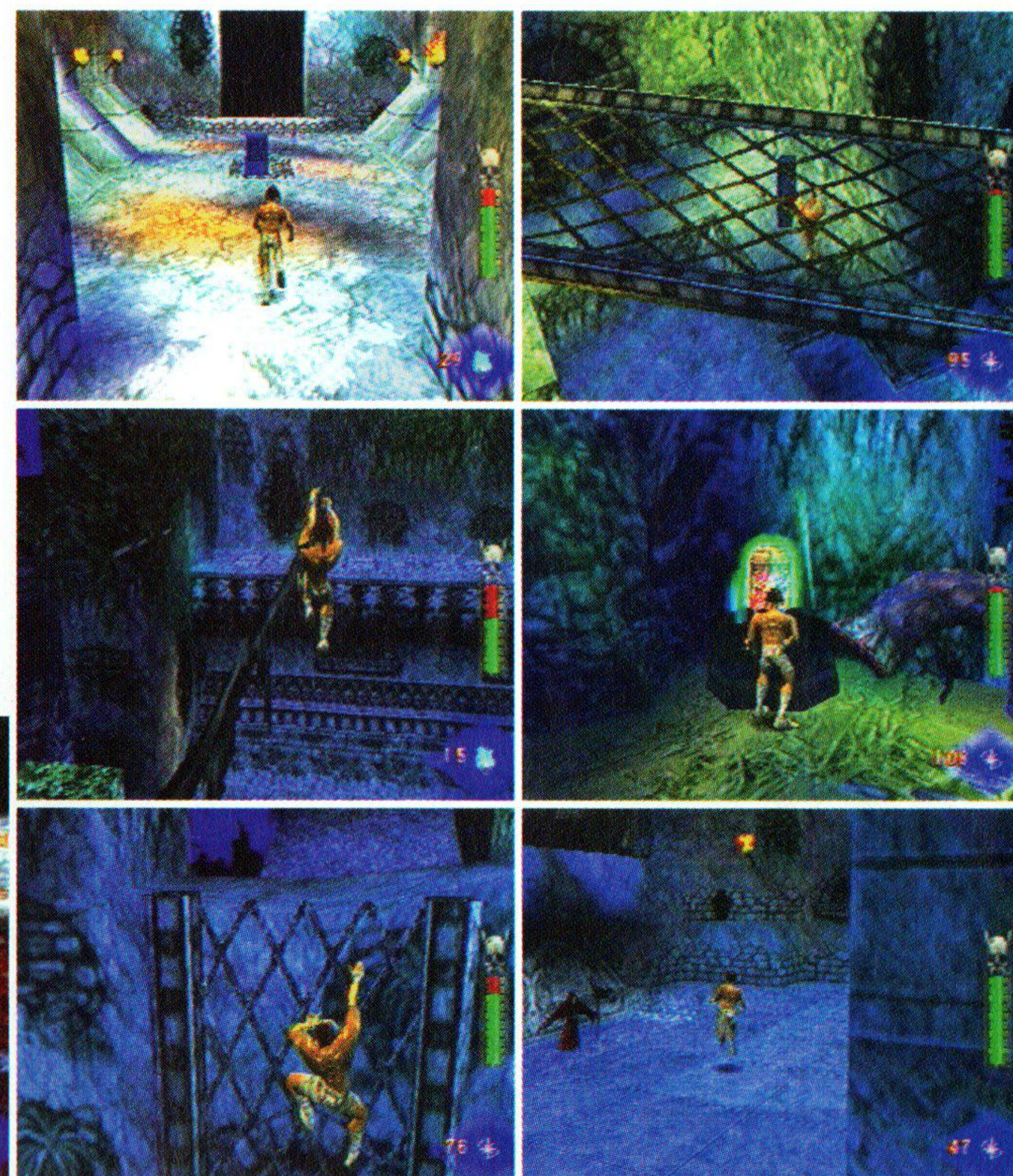
Throughout the game *Akuji* moves across some varied terrains, all of which help to create the hellish atmosphere intended and murdered you on your wedding day by removing your heart. You find yourself condemned to hell and must now find a way back to Mamora, using the spirits of your ancestors to guide you.

The game itself could perhaps be better described as a *Heretic II* clone than a *Tomb Raider* one. The general style of the game shares much from Activision's recent masterpiece, but the level layout would still suit Lara's style down to the ground. The 3D worlds are impressively large and look very nice, with some particularly good lighting effects – you'll notice the flame torches creating flickering effects on the land around you, and the red and green

with ammo that can found after killing enemies and destroying crates. One early difficulty with the magic is aiming the non-homing projectiles, of which many can be wasted, but the team have included a stationary first-person mode with targeting cursor similar to the one seen in the *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, which works well enough with analogue control.

Know your enemies

Apparently there are 30 enemies in the game and four main boss characters to defeat. Their AI is reasonable, but it seems that combat is slightly restricted at the moment – you have no defend command, so *Akuji* has a tendency to charge into



The only real problem with the game engine that we've noticed at this early stage is the automatic camera; it can be very slow to pan around and you have to keep on correcting it – especially when you are attempting to perform a series of accurate jumps across the level.

Akuji the Heartless is shaping up to be a very impressive game, and it could well knock *Tomb Raider III* off the current top spot. The main worry regarding its possible success will be the hype generated by Eidos' and Crystal Dynamics' other imminent title, *Soul Reaver*, which is shaping up to be a truly phenomenal game. However it works out, Eidos certainly won't be complaining. With this,



The enemies are well-designed. These worm-like creatures burst out from the ground as you walk past

YOU'LL NOTICE THE FLAME TORCHES CREATING FLICKERING EFFECTS ON THE LAND AROUND YOU, AND THE RED AND GREEN LAMPS HELP TO SUCCESSFULLY CREATE AN OTHER-WORLDBLY ATMOSPHERE

lamps help to successfully create an other-worldly atmosphere.

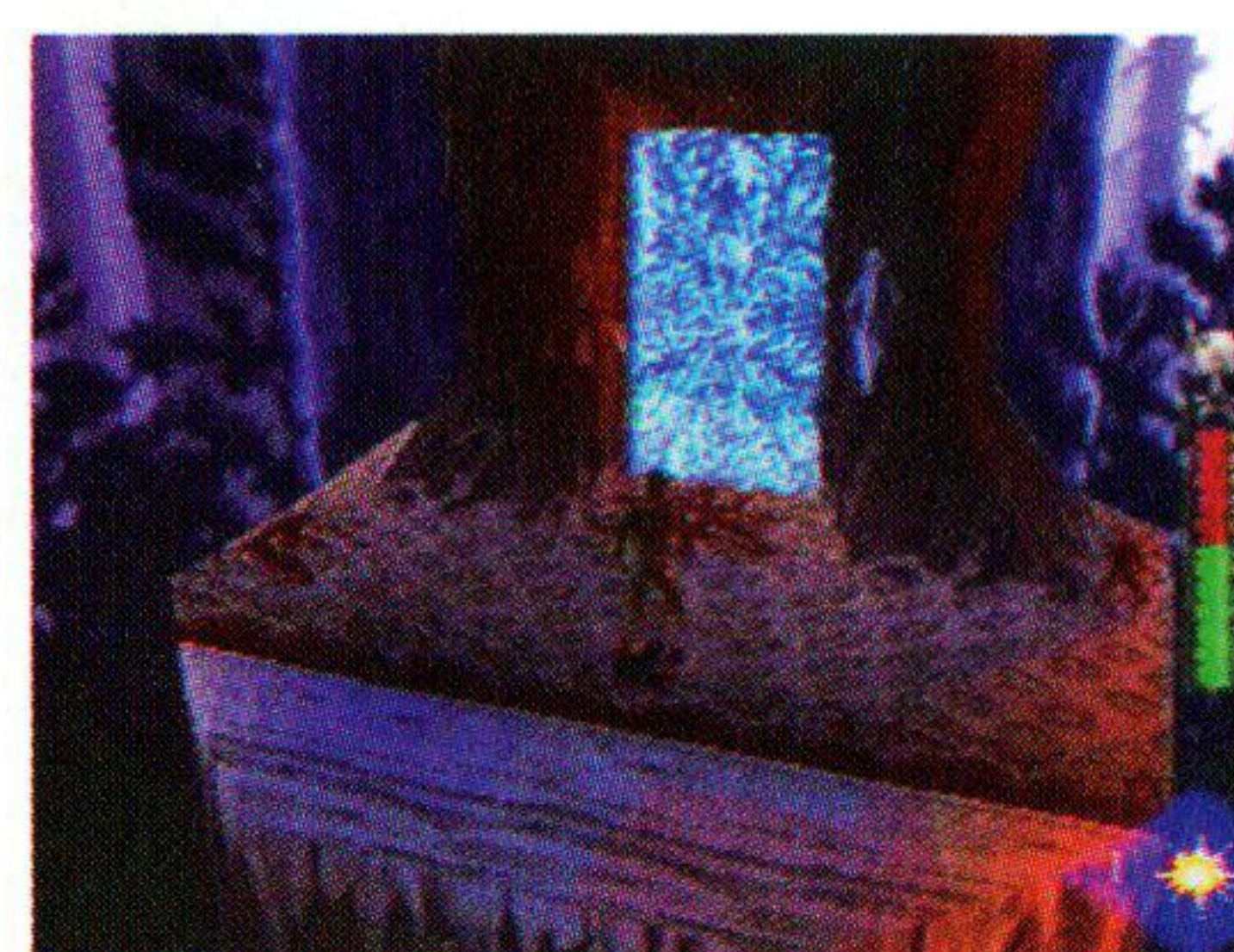
Your character is also well-animated and polished (looking as if he's come straight out of the old Psygnosis adventure/platformer, *The Shadow of the Beast*) and is very easy to control. As well as the obvious commands (jump, crouch etc.) you can also perform combo attacks with your close-range weapon and collect spells for long-range projectile attacks.

The spells vary significantly and can be both offensive and defensive, but they are used just as additional weapons,

an attack and slog it out, ignoring your health meter.

Akuji's quest to locate his ancestors may require you to return to many of the previously completed levels. After finishing each, you move into a hall, from where you can select the next level or any of the previous ones. The plot of the game will be continued after, before, and occasionally during each level. Quite often the story has developed while you are still in control of your character, which is a nice touch, adding an almost movie-like quality to the game.

Soul Reaver and *Tomb Raider III* under their belt, it will be a very prosperous start to '99 for the British company. **TC**



SUMMING UP



- Great graphics, animation and sound, with some big and very open game areas.
- Superbly presented, and enjoyable from the first game.



- At this stage there is not enough variety in the combat, which could become repetitive.
- The automatic camera is a bit sluggish.



It's shaping up to be another superb third-person adventure that could well knock *Tomb Raider III* of its perch. Enough said, really.



Tank Racers

Despite bearing a **strong resemblance** to *S.C.A.R.S.*, *Tank Racers* from **Grolier Interactive** could be just the **tonic** for many of you **militant-minded youngsters**.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Grolier Interactive
DEVELOPER	Simis
STYLE	Racing Sim
RELEASE	March
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	1-6
PROCESSOR	P133 P200
MEMORY	16MB
DISK SPACE	TBA
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

Thinking about the ridiculous number of superb racing games on the PC at the moment, there are very few that don't take the sport too seriously. Games like *Mario Kart* and *Co.* have proved every bit as much fun as the serious racers, and while this style of game has flourished on the consoles, there have been very few that have made it onto the PC. *Tank Racers* is no *Mario Kart* clone, though, and it was never intended to be. It's simply a light-hearted racer with an obvious and very distinct emphasis on

playability – and it's shaping up very well indeed.

Would-be tank racers begin the game with a limited choice of vehicles to use, though there are a total of

AT THIS STAGE IT IS DEFINITELY LOOKING LIKE A VERY SOLID FOUNDATION FOR A STRONG AND ENTERTAINING RACING GAME

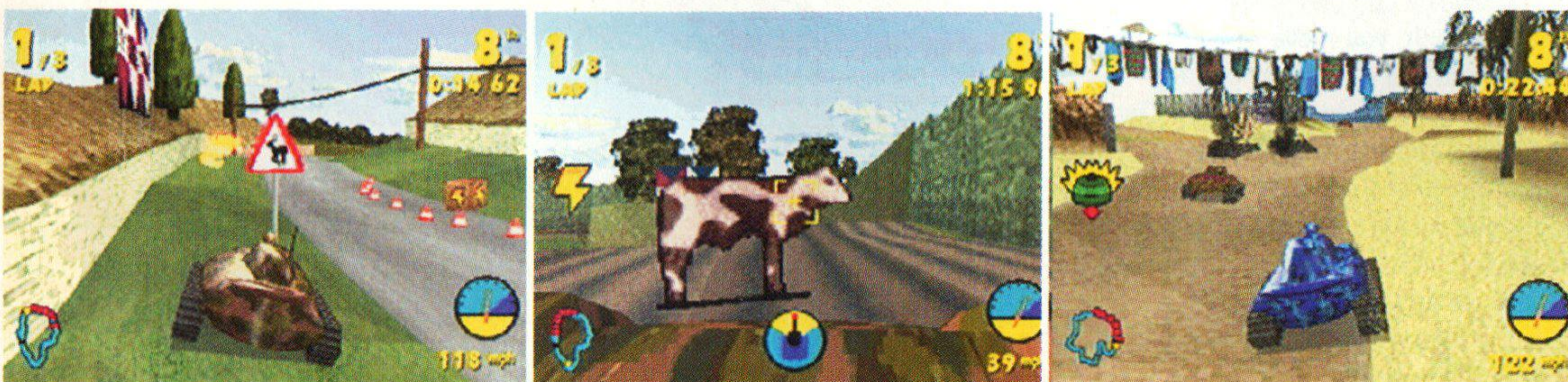
twelve in all. Each tank has noticeably different abilities – some fast and weak, others slow and tough – but all share one thing in common: a very large gun. Weapon pick-ups can be found scattered around every track, and to

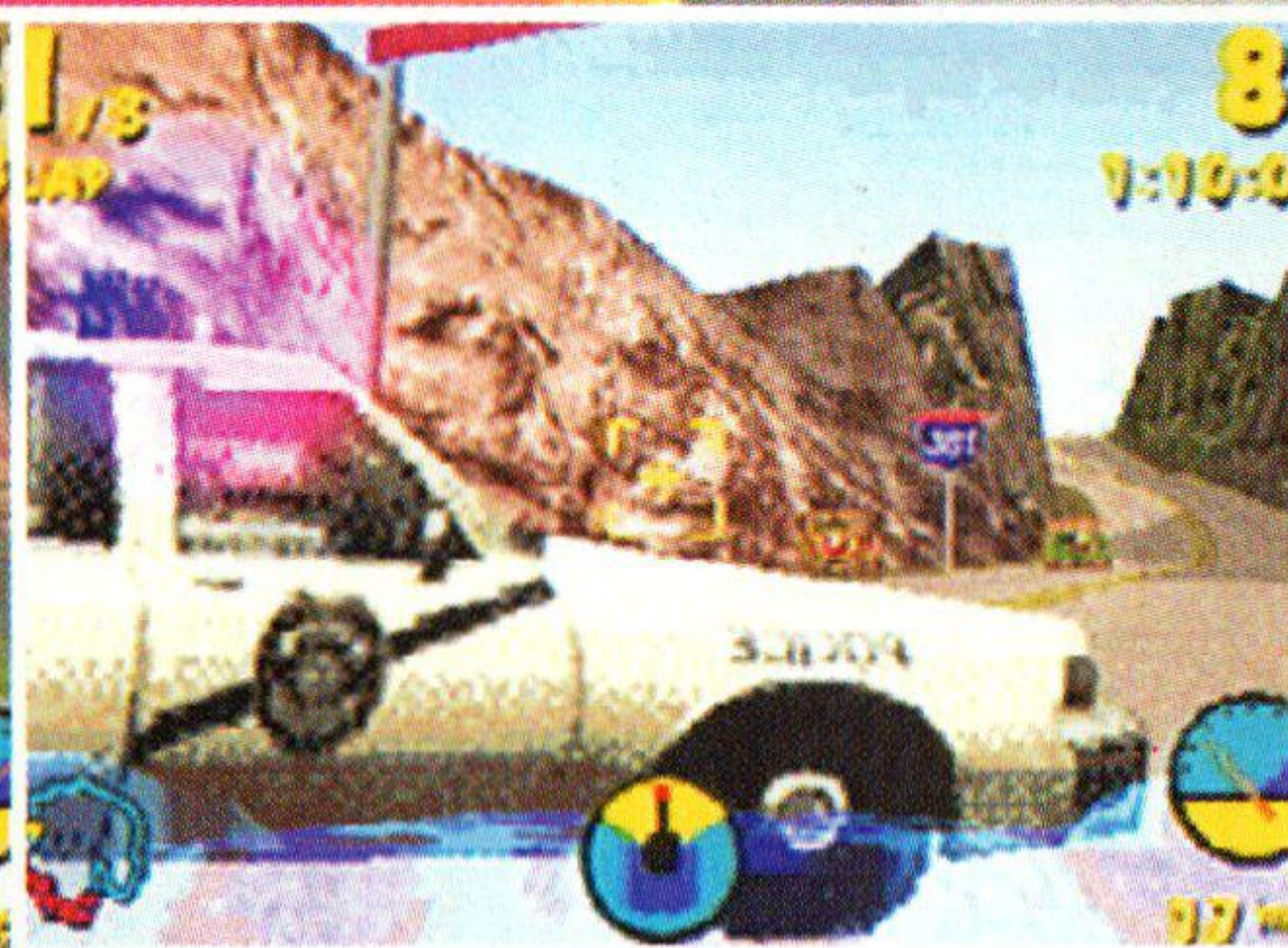
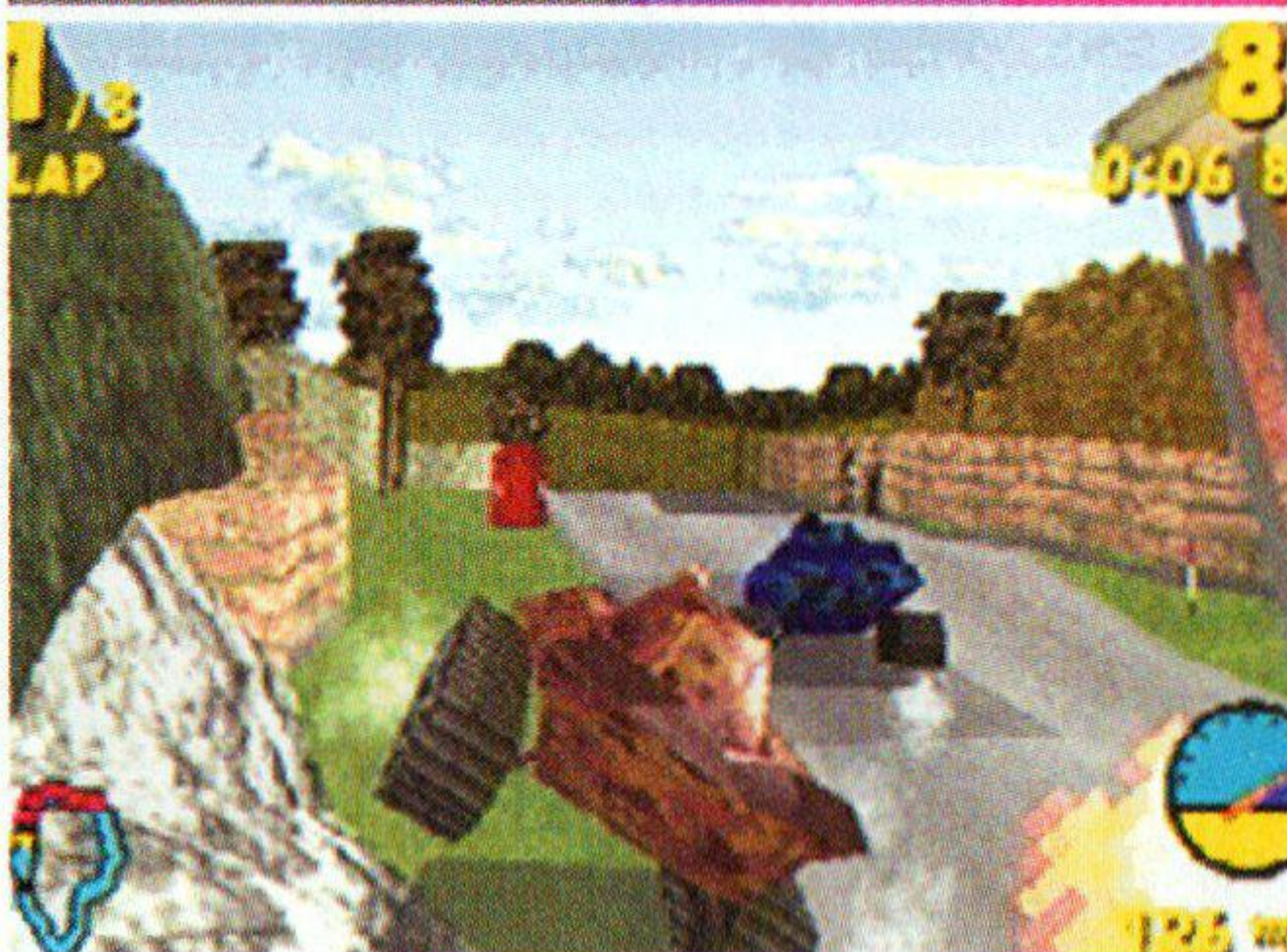
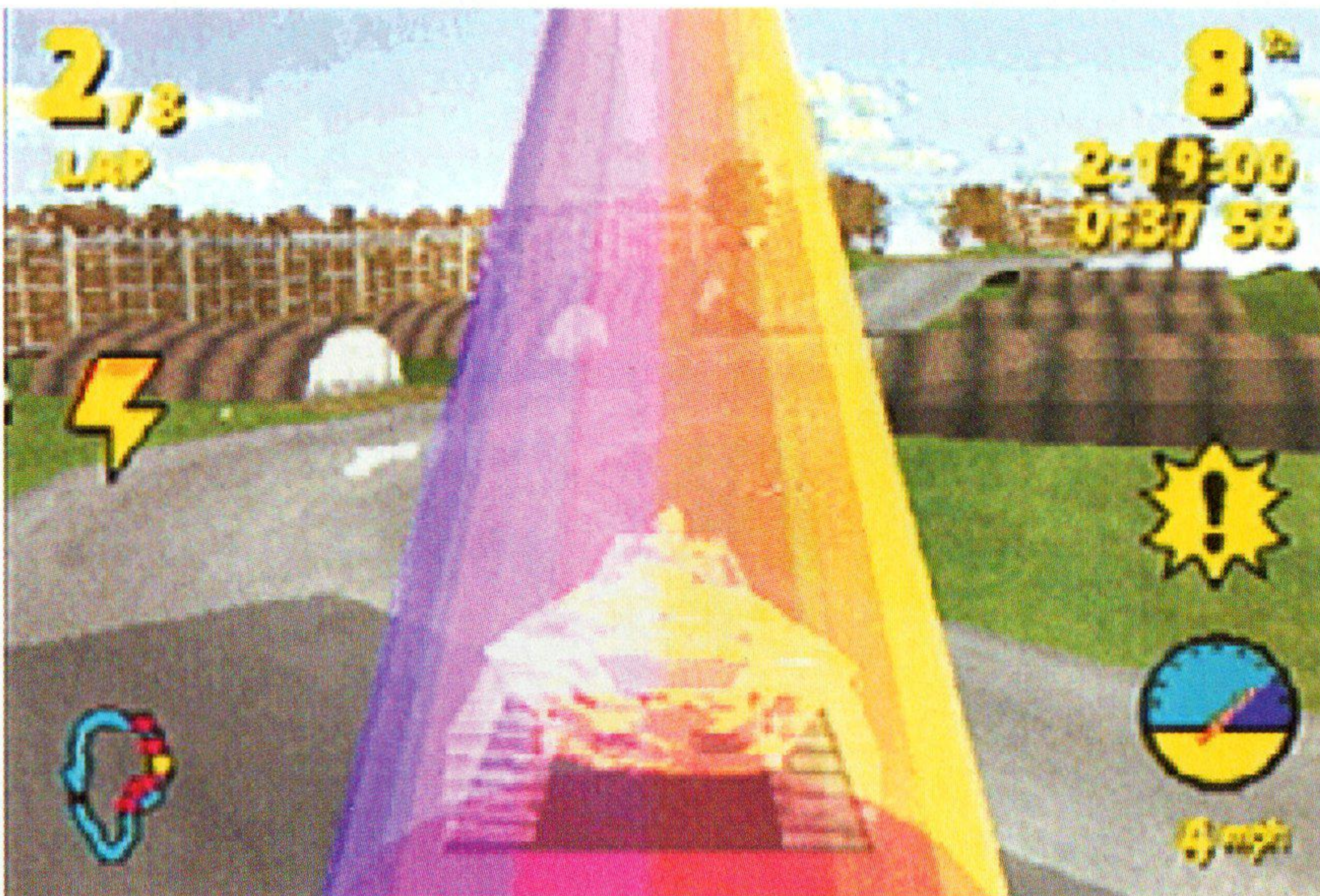
avoid becoming too realistic there are a number of very diverse and varied armaments that can be added to your vehicle. As well as mortars and rockets, there are alien abduction weapons that

call upon UFOs to throw the targeted tank to the back of the race. Many of the weapons can also be doubled up if you pick the same one twice.

Clockwise

The championship is made up of fifteen varied, albeit fairly short, tracks in which players race against the clock and the competitors in a linear nature. Success on each track unlocks it for use in the single race mode to fine tune your skills. Because you are racing through the levels in a hefty tank, there are certain features here that are specific to this game. To begin with the levels are fairly complicated, with what might seem like





quite a narrow path to follow, but you'll often find yourself veering off the road, crashing through fences and suddenly chancing upon a quicker route through the course. Corners of buildings can be knocked down and gates and roadblocks smashed through. Though these hardly take the form of secret routes, it makes the game a bit more interesting. Because of the nature of your vehicle, you can steer the tank by controlling the two tracks individually, which gives you a much greater sense of control.

Tanks for the memory

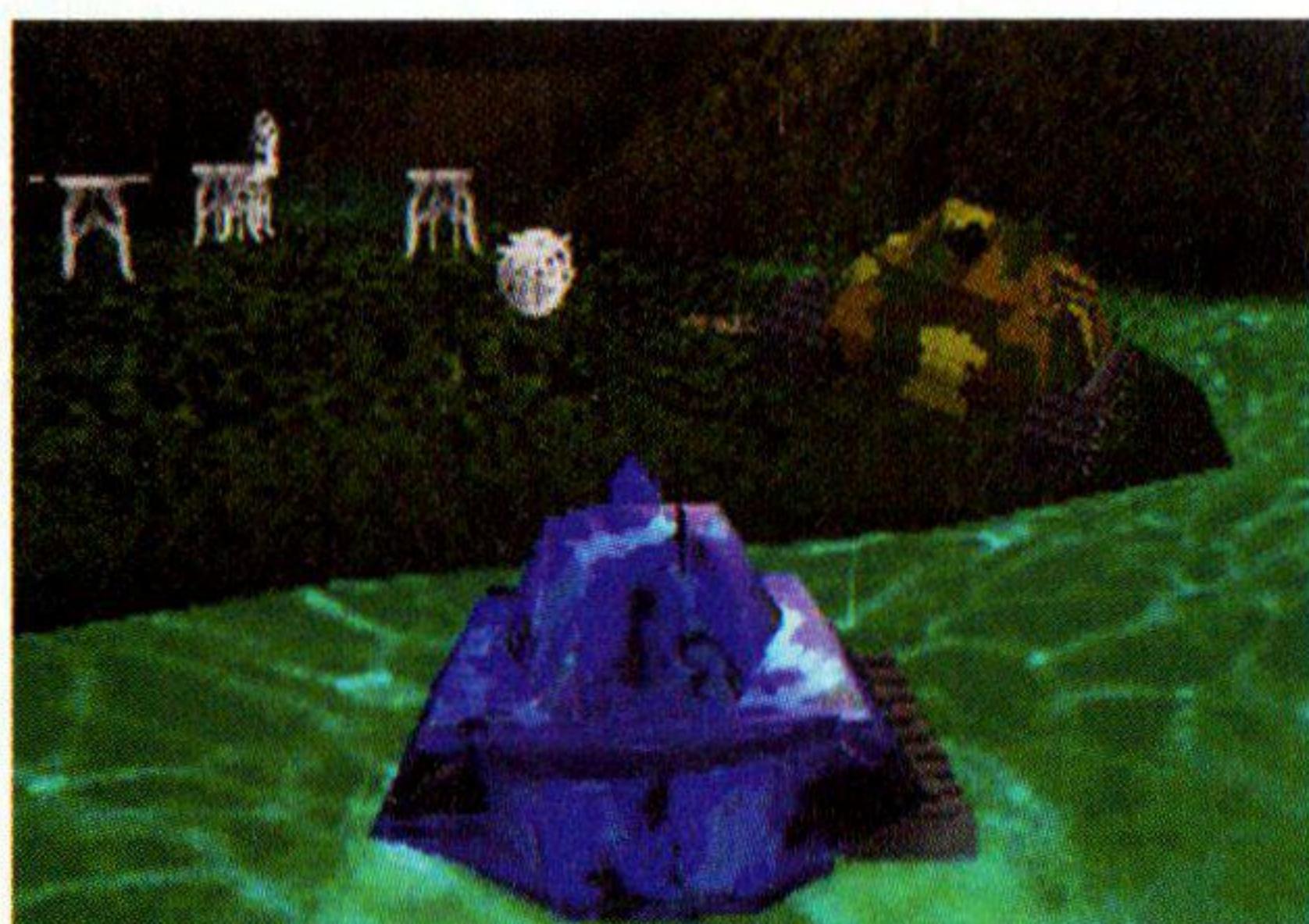
The greatest cause for excitement is *Tank Racers'* multiplayer mode. Games like these are far superior when played against your mates, and this is no exception. As well as the normal race mode, you can also participate in a battle game situated within a huge arena in an attempt to destroy the other players. In this mode you can use the turret rotation to much greater effect, firing off rounds while driving in another direction – something that you'll rarely use in the single player mode.

Completion of the game in record times may unlock one of the many hidden bonus games. While these are mostly variations of classic games such as *Asteroids* (played

with a tank), they add to the game's life span that little bit more.

Tank Racers is not going to break any records, but at this stage it is definitely looking like a very solid foundation for a strong and entertaining racing game. The game is very well-presented, the graphics are good, and the game is very smooth and chugs along at a fairly nippy pace – even with the low specs. It's certainly going to be a game that would interest people with multiplayer capabilities far more than the rest of you, but at this stage of its development it's hard to see how it could turn out badly. **TC**

Sadly we have been unable to use any screenshots from the PC version of the game, but these PlayStation screens are almost identical save for the lower resolution



SERVICE STATION

Tank Racers will be making an appearance on the PlayStation and is scheduled to be released at the same time as its PC relative. In essence the game will be exactly the same; it will run using the PlayStation's high-res mode and will include a two player split screen option. The PlayStation has more competition in this genre, but with any luck, *Tank Racers* will find a small niche somewhere amongst the crowd.



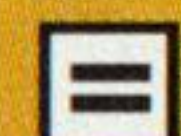
SUMMING UP



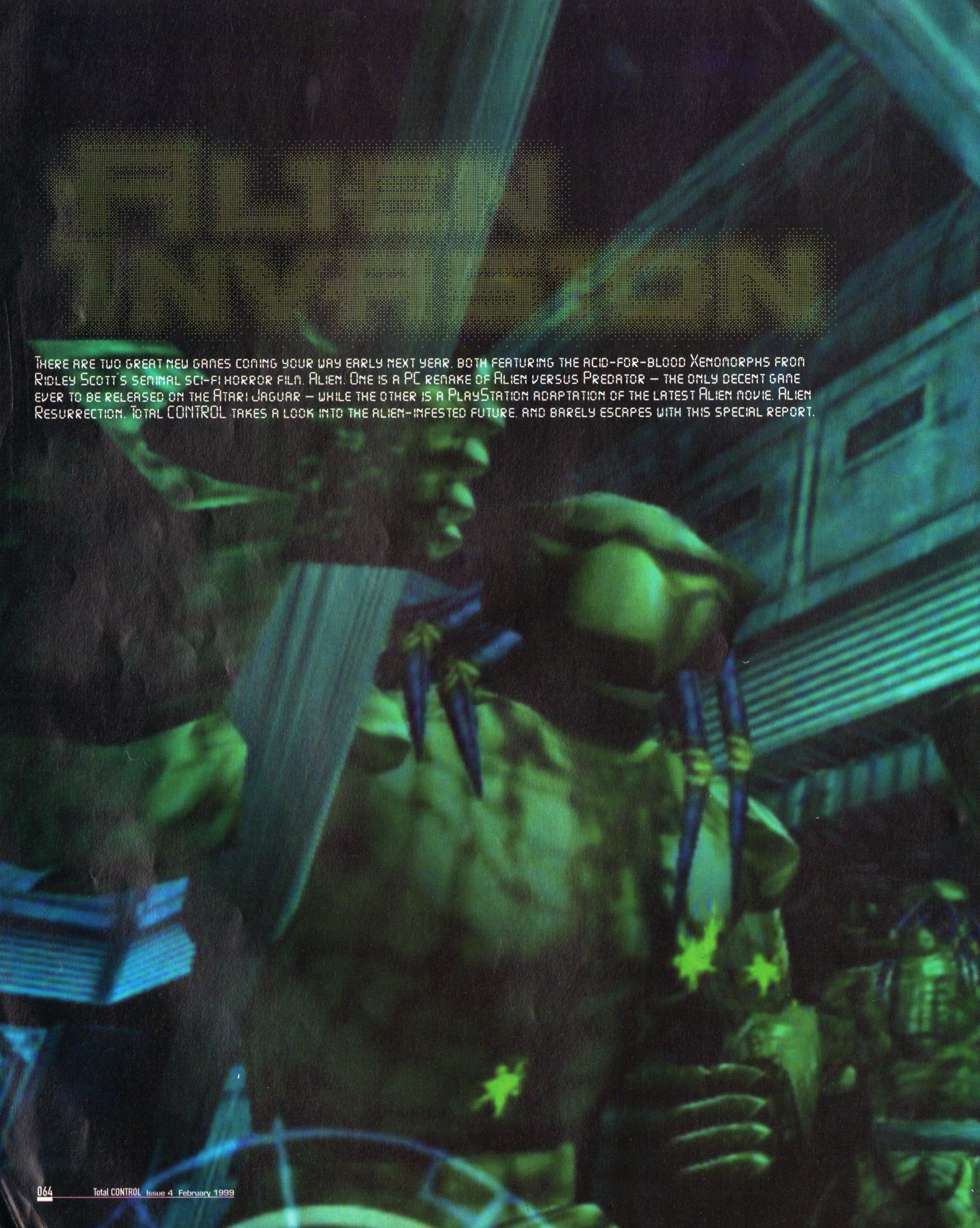
- A simple enough racing game with a big pick up and play factor.
- Nice, bright graphics that compliment the game and are easily pulled off on a low spec machine.



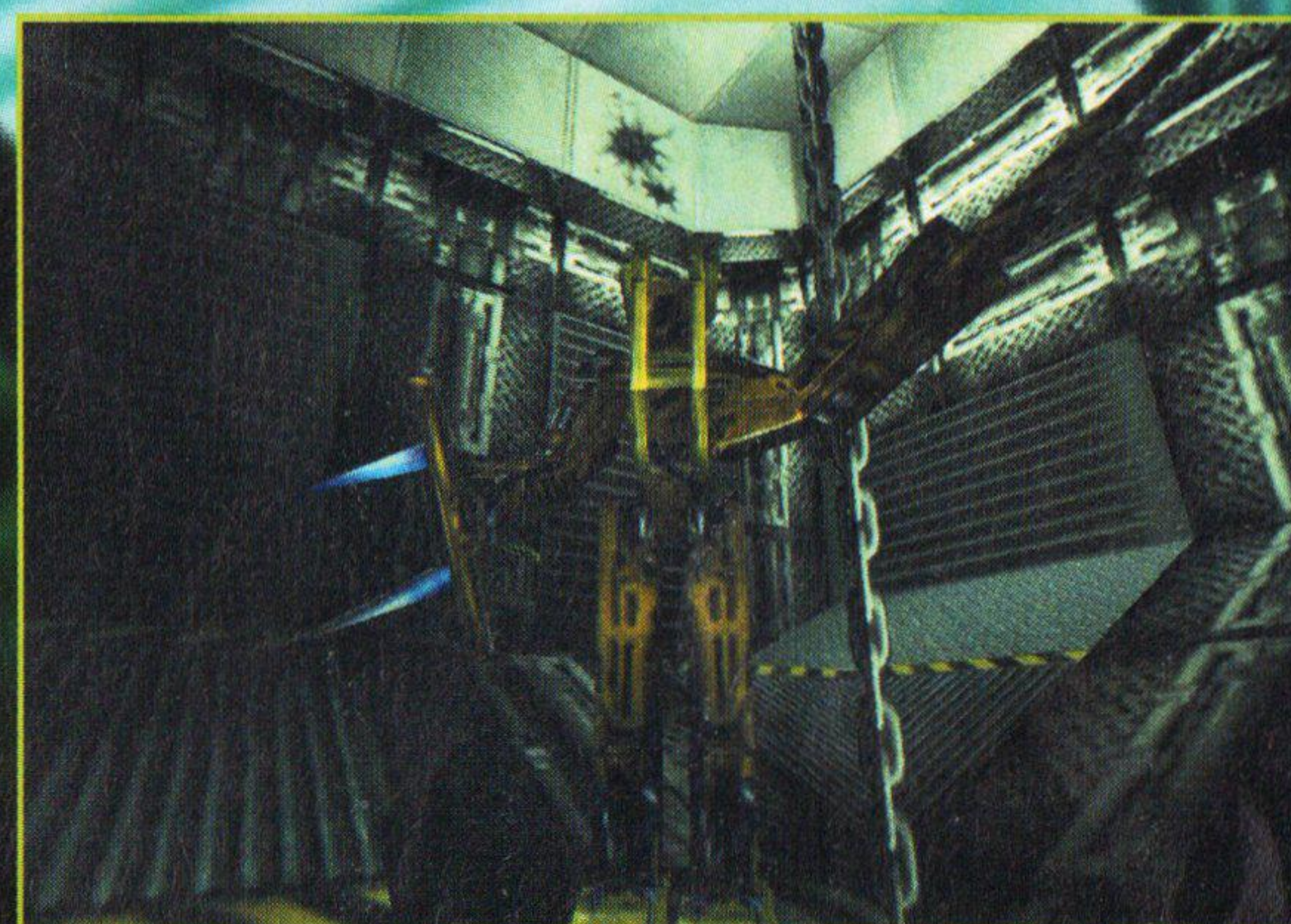
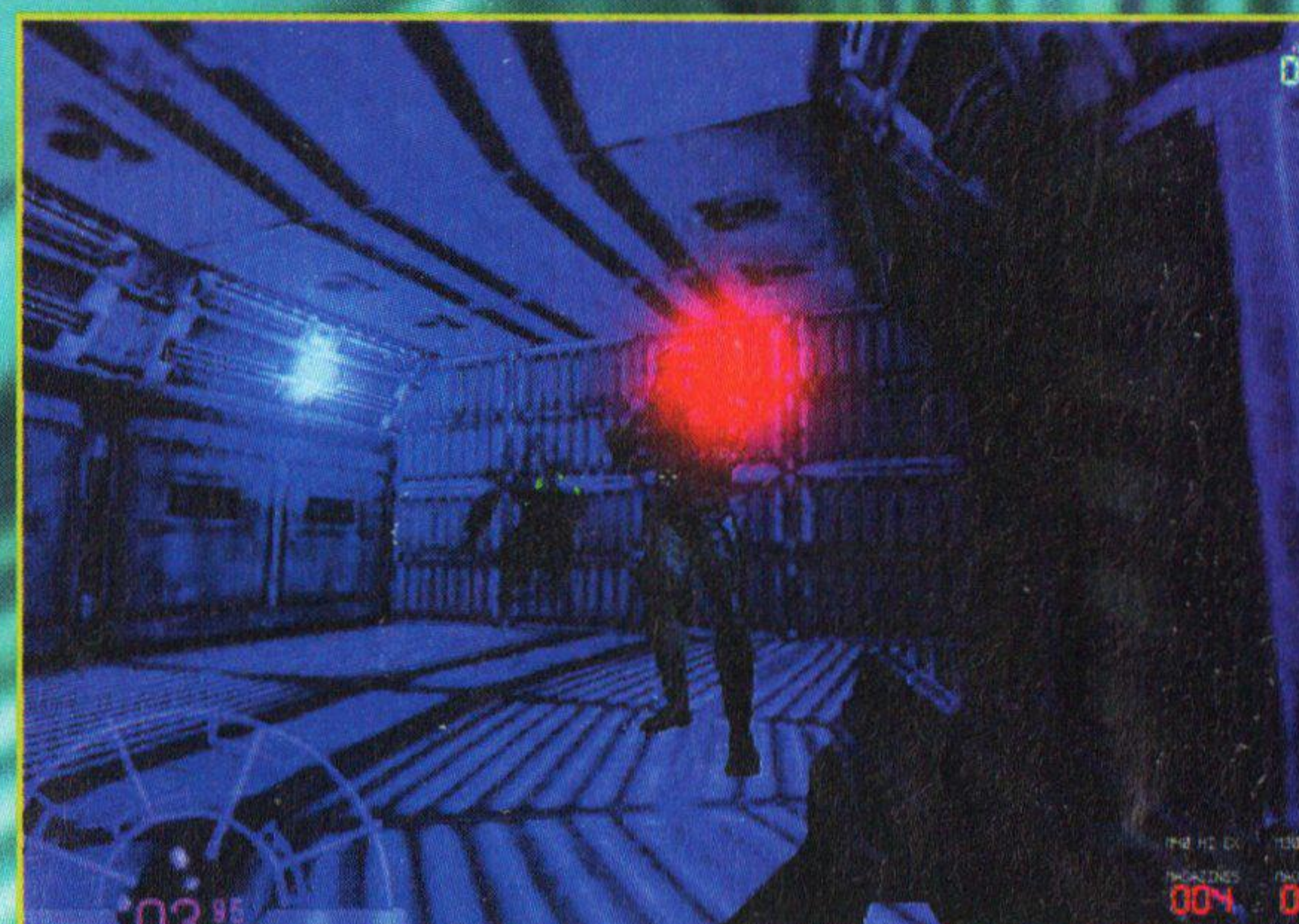
- There may not be enough depth in the game in terms of its lastability.
- Players unable to use the multiplayer mode will not get the most from the game.



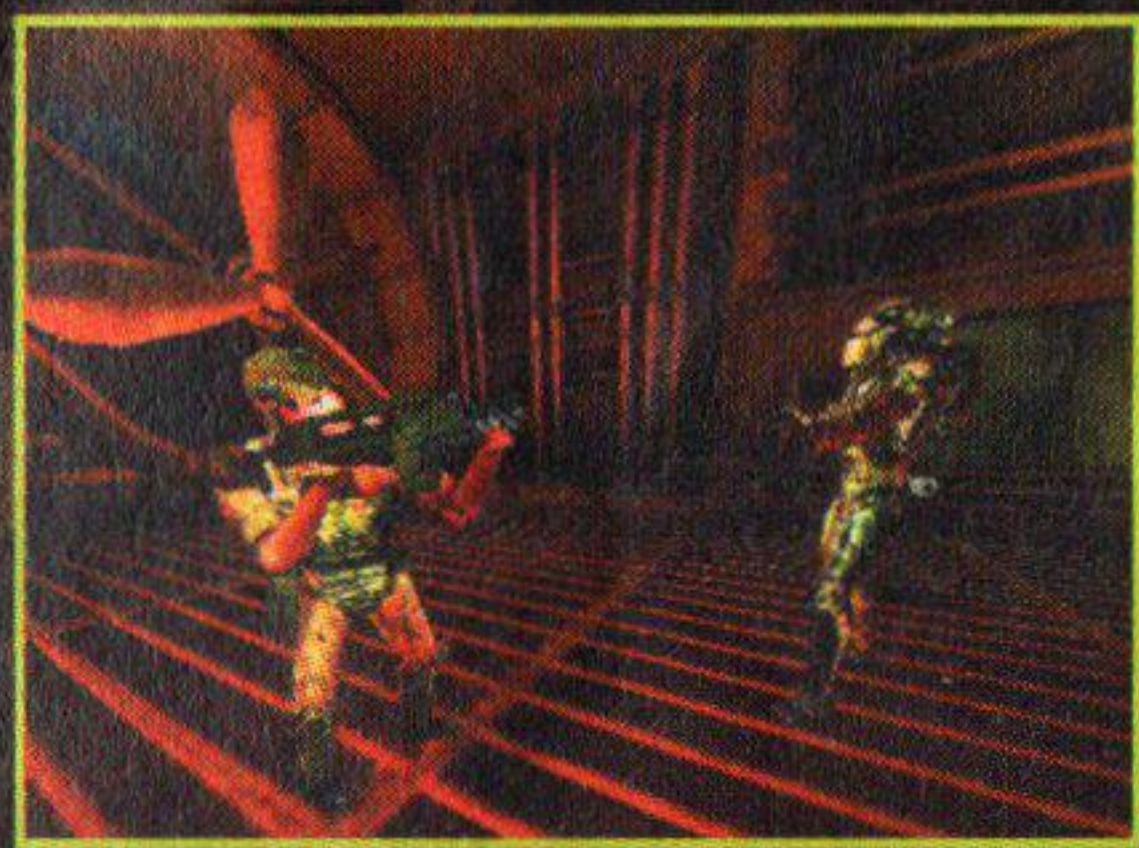
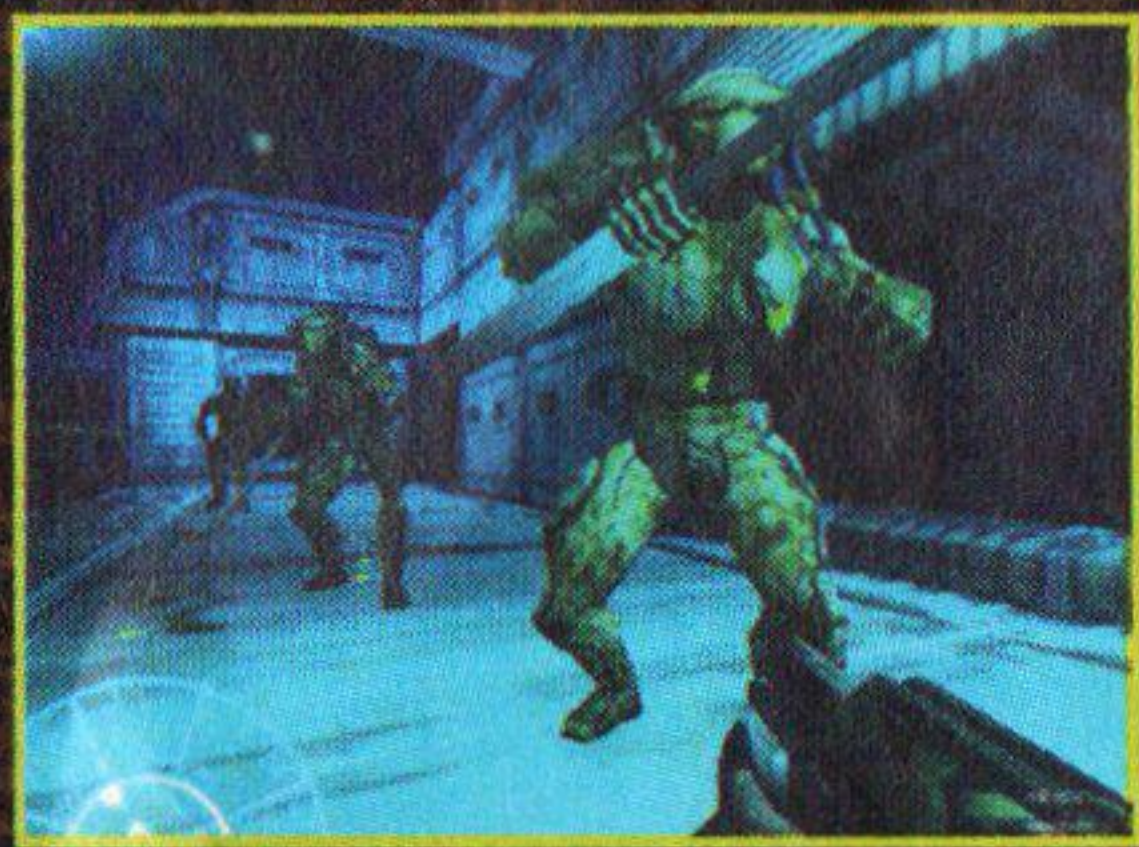
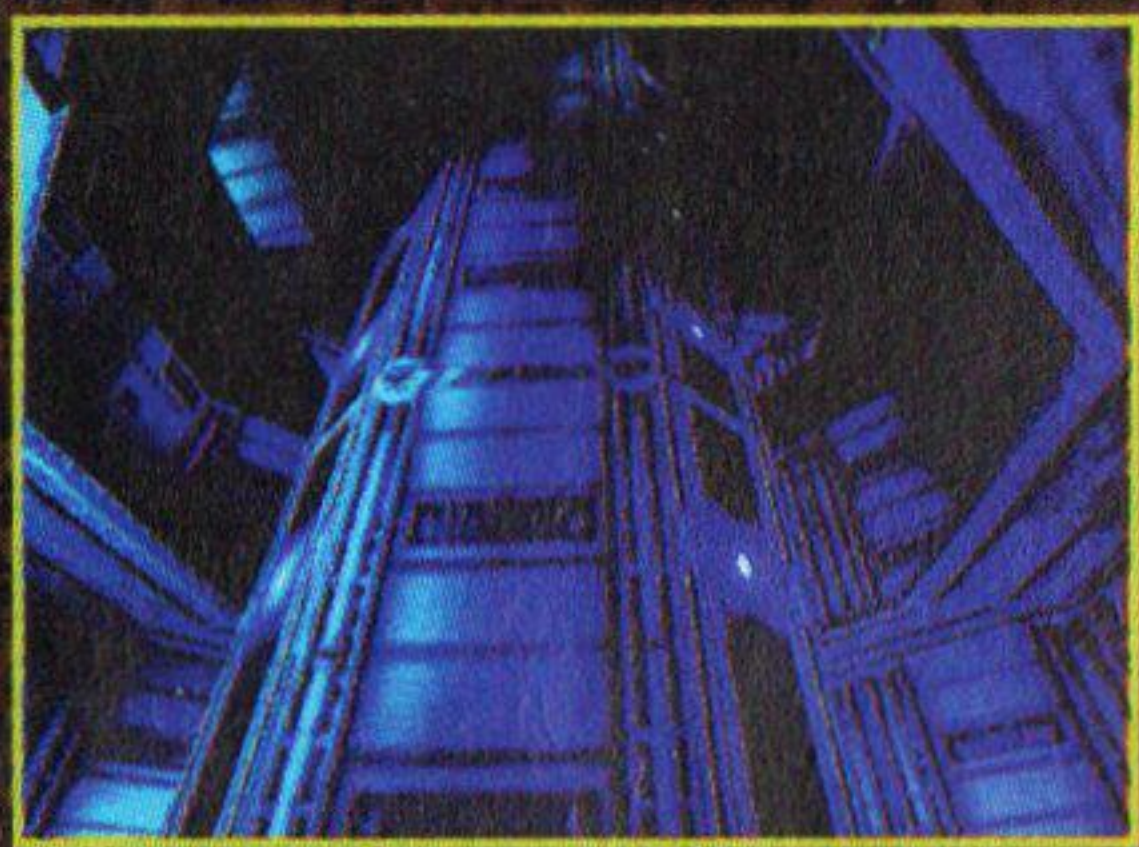
An easy to pick up, hard to put down racer that plays well and looks like being a lot of fun.

A Predator is shown in a dark, industrial environment, possibly a spaceship or a mine. The Predator is wearing its characteristic mask and has a glowing yellow visor. It is holding a large, curved blade in its right hand. The background is dark and metallic, with some structural elements visible. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on the Predator's mask and the blade.

THERE ARE TWO GREAT NEW GAMES COMING YOUR WAY EARLY NEXT YEAR, BOTH FEATURING THE ACID-FOR-BLOOD XENOMORPHS FROM RIDLEY SCOTT'S SEMINAL SCI-FI HORROR FILM, ALIEN. ONE IS A PC RENAISSANCE OF ALIEN VERSUS PREDATOR — THE ONLY DECENT GAME EVER TO BE RELEASED ON THE ATARI JAGUAR — WHILE THE OTHER IS A PLAYSTATION ADAPTATION OF THE LATEST ALIEN MOVIE, ALIEN RESURRECTION. TOTAL CONTROL TAKES A LOOK INTO THE ALIEN-INFESTED FUTURE, AND BARELY ESCAPES WITH THIS SPECIAL REPORT.



Aliens versus Predator



Okay, so the Predator has bandy legs, bad hair and a squint, but do you want to tell him about it?

The **two scariest sci-fi killers** in the galaxy meet head on, with the poor old **Colonial Marines** caught right in the middle.

At four movies to two, the Aliens have got the Predator pretty well whipped on the big screen, so he's looking to your PC monitor to even the score. Rebellion Software's original *Alien versus Predator*, a first-person 3D combat game, appeared on the now sadly defunct Atari Jaguar, and was generally reckoned to be just about the only decent thing on that ill-fated console. Rebellion are now working on a new version, to be published by Fox Interactive for accelerated PCs. Twentieth Century Fox hold the copyright to both the Alien and Predator movies, so I guess you can't blame them for wanting to get the most mileage out of their products. Their software branch have been responsible for a couple of excellent titles over the past year, including *Croc*, *Motorhead* and the *X-Files* game.

THE LIGHTING EFFECTS LOOK JUST AS GOOD AS ANYTHING UNREAL HAS TO OFFER, COMPLETE WITH COLOURED LIGHTS, SMOKE, MIST AND SHADOWS

In this latest offering, you get to assume the role of either an Alien, a Predator, or a Colonial Marine, the heavily armed but helpless cannon fodder from the second movie in the series. Each has different abilities and different goals, but they all have two things in common: everything else in the world is out to kill them in a variety of disgusting ways, and they are utterly alone.

There are a series of games demo disks doing the rounds of the games mags at the moment, as Fox are wisely attempting to spread their PR budget around to maximum effect. To this end they have produced three different disks, one for each species, and have sent them out to different magazines so that

everyone gets a different demo. It was a good idea, and we were sent a copy of the excellent Predator demo. However, we share a floor with Ultimate PC, so we got to look at their Colonial Marine demo as well – and it rocks. If any other games mags writers are reading this, how about a trade? You could end up with all three demos...

All the demos share certain features in common. You start off with minimum weaponry with a mission to accomplish, and you have to find your way through a maze of enemy-infested tunnels. The game runs on its own proprietary 3D engine – and a highly superior piece of programming it is too. The lighting effects look as good as anything *Unreal* has to offer, with coloured lights, smoke, mist and shadows. The levels are dark and atmospheric, and when a Xenomorph comes charging towards you across the ceiling, with the flickering of broken lights making the entire scene strobe like madness, you will have to fight back the urge to panic. The action in this game is very fast, and you'll need sharp reflexes and a good aim to survive.

Depending on which race you choose, you will have a different mission to accomplish. All three missions take place in Pandora Base, a secret biological warfare research facility working on the genetic biology of the Alien Xenomorph. As the Alien, your goal is simply to survive by killing everyone else with a variety of weapons, including claws, tail and acid venom. The Alien can run at terrifying speeds across walls and ceilings and use acute senses to track down its prey. With the help of genetic technology it can be transformed into a





Xenoborg, a hybrid bio-mechanical entity and the most powerful and destructive force in the game.

As the Predator, your goals are more complex. You are part of the crew of a captured scout ship, but you have escaped in the confusion following a sabotage attack. You

THIS IS NOT SIMPLY A SHOOT-'EM-UP; YOU WILL NEED TO USE YOUR HEAD TO STAY ALIVE. IF YOU GO UP AGAINST THE ALIENS WITH GUNS BLAZING, YOU WON'T LAST LONG

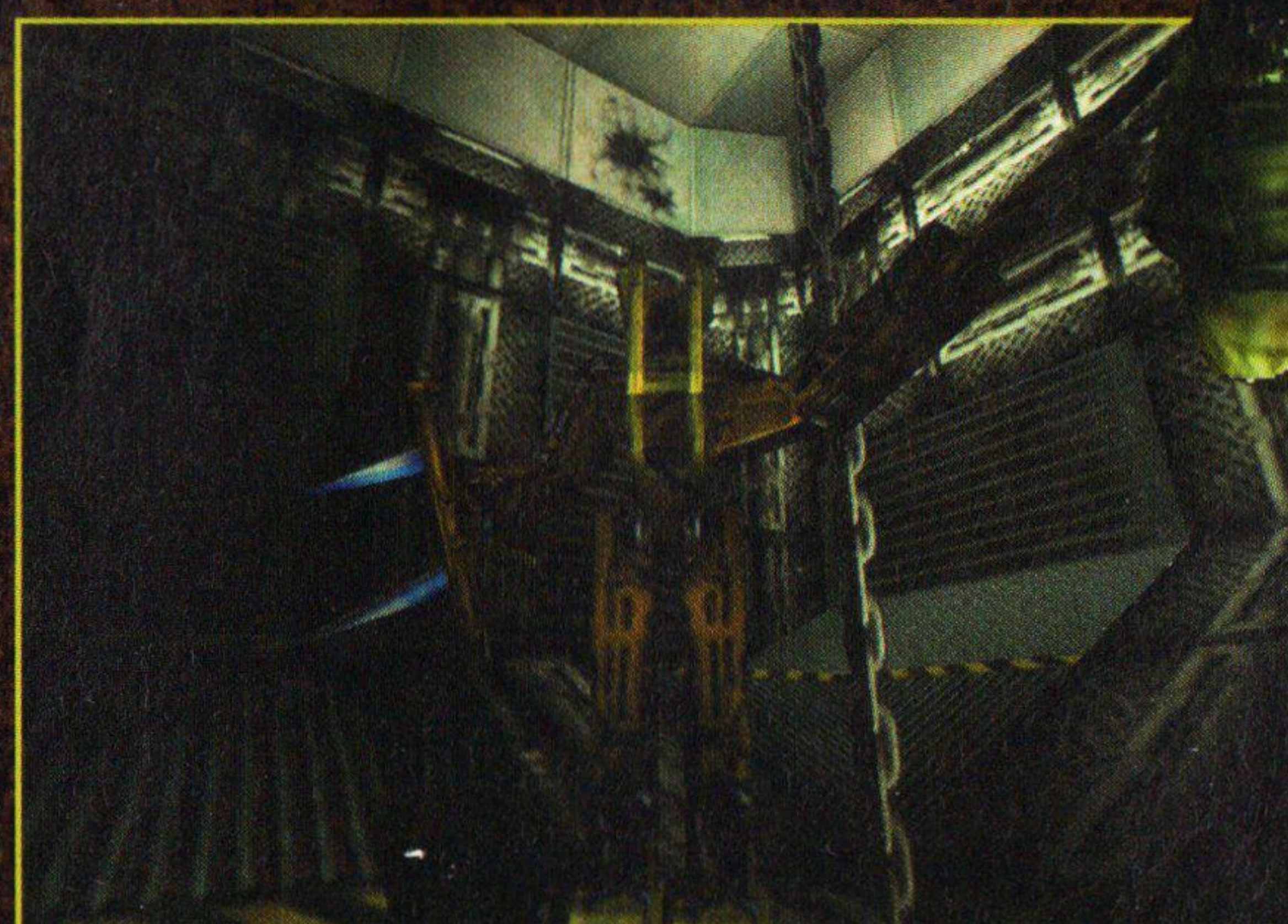
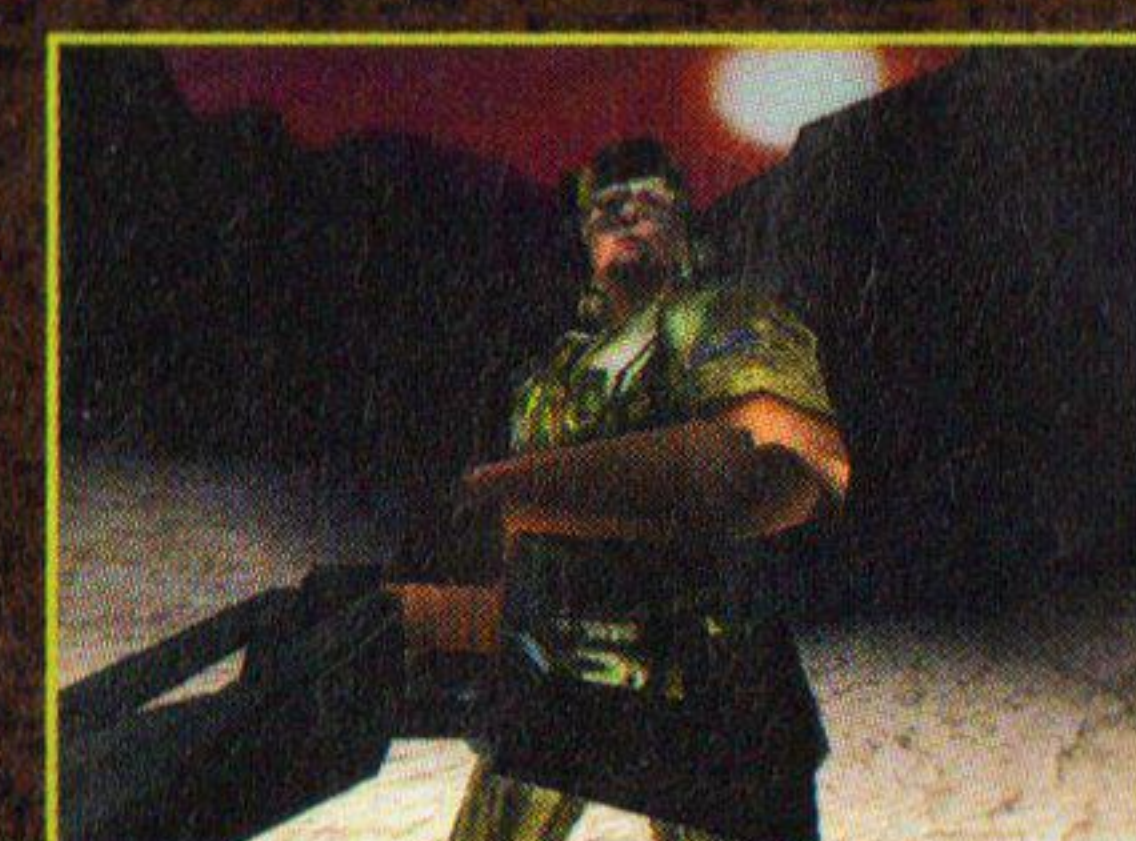
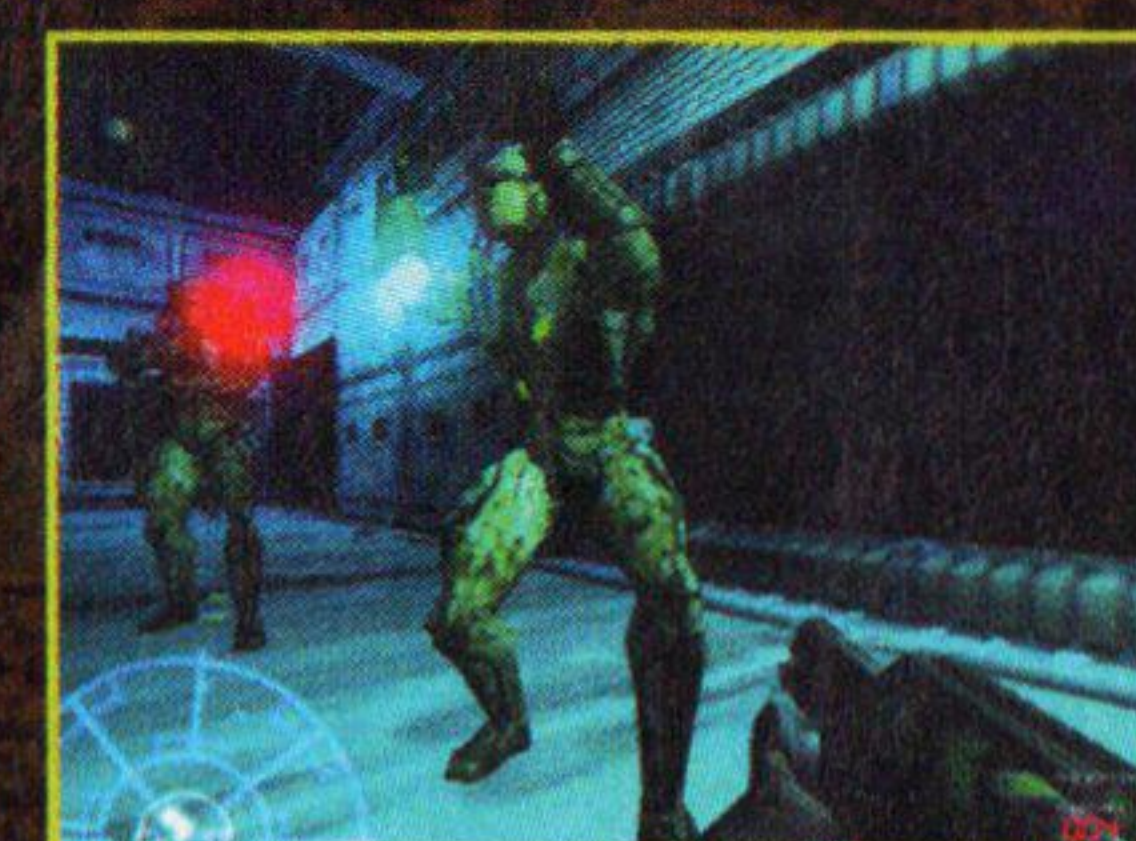
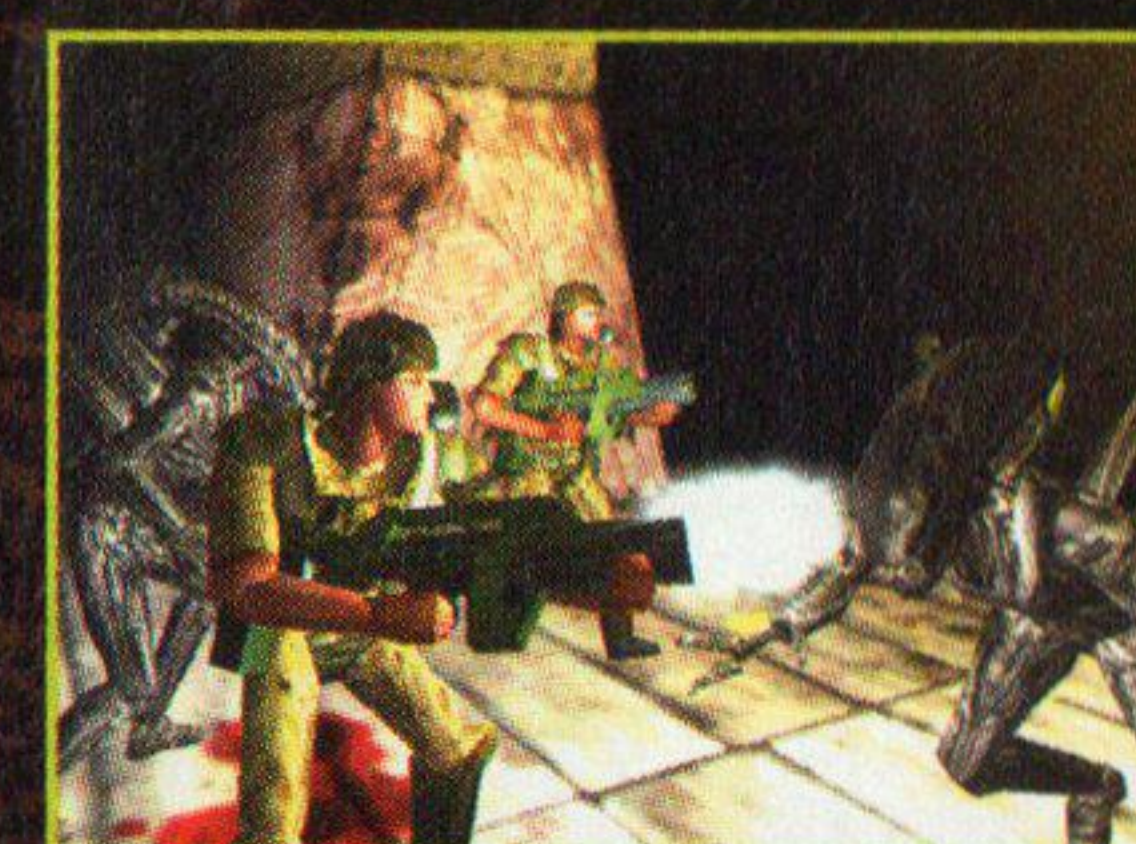
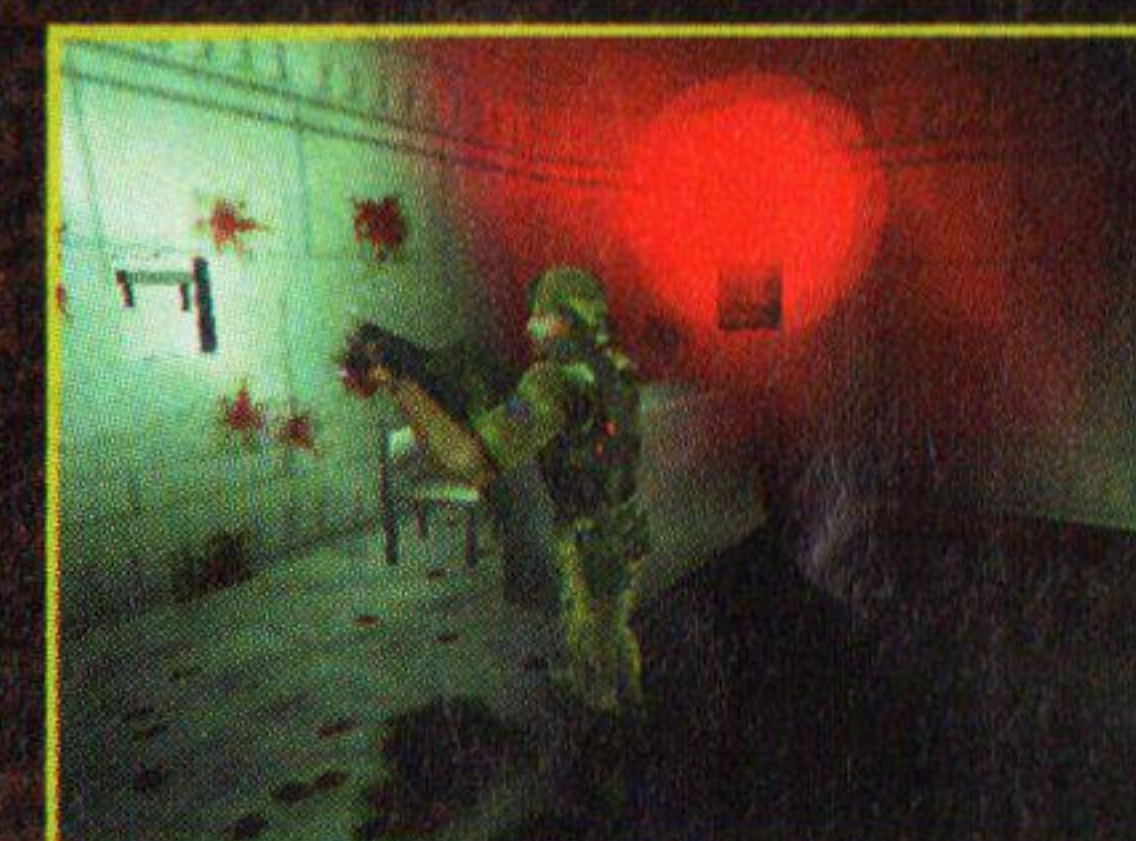
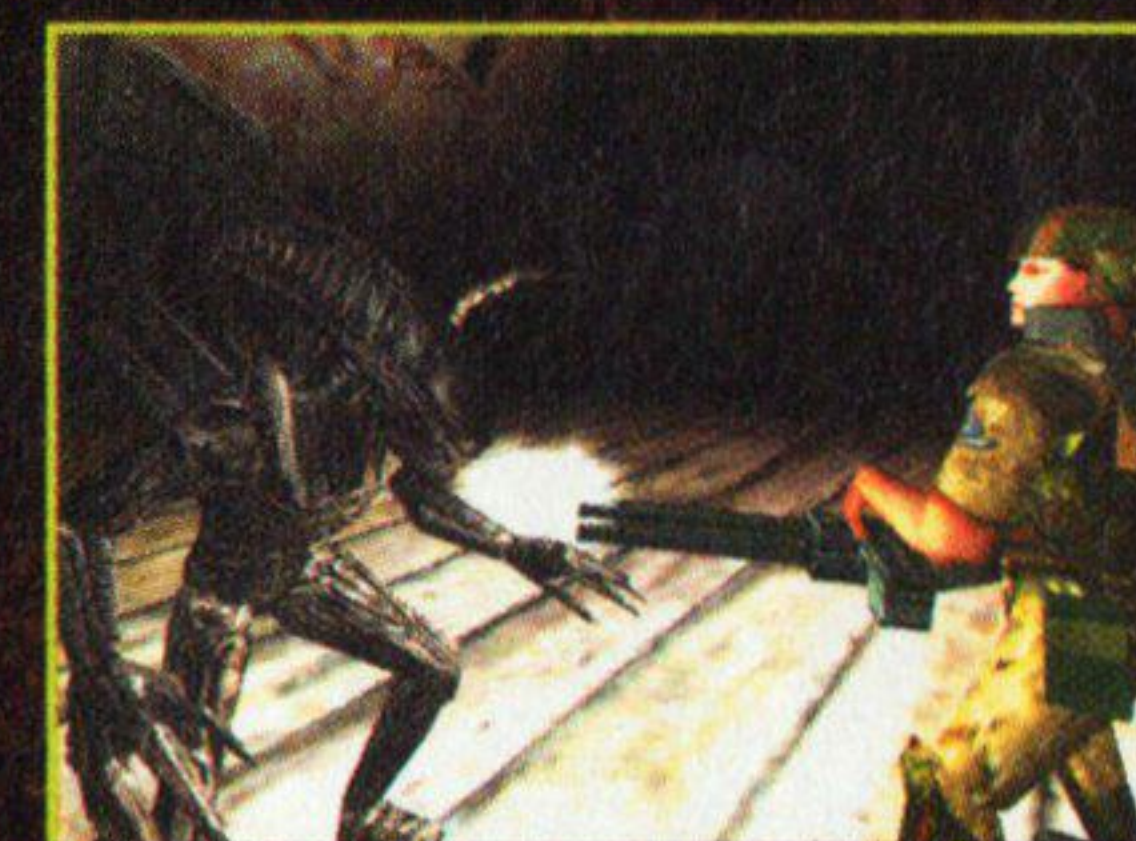
start off armed with only the retractable wrist blades, spear gun and shoulder cannon, but you have the advantage of the famous light-bending camouflage, and infra-red and electromagnetic vision. Your mission is to locate and free your captured crew-mates and find some missing parts of your ship before you can escape.

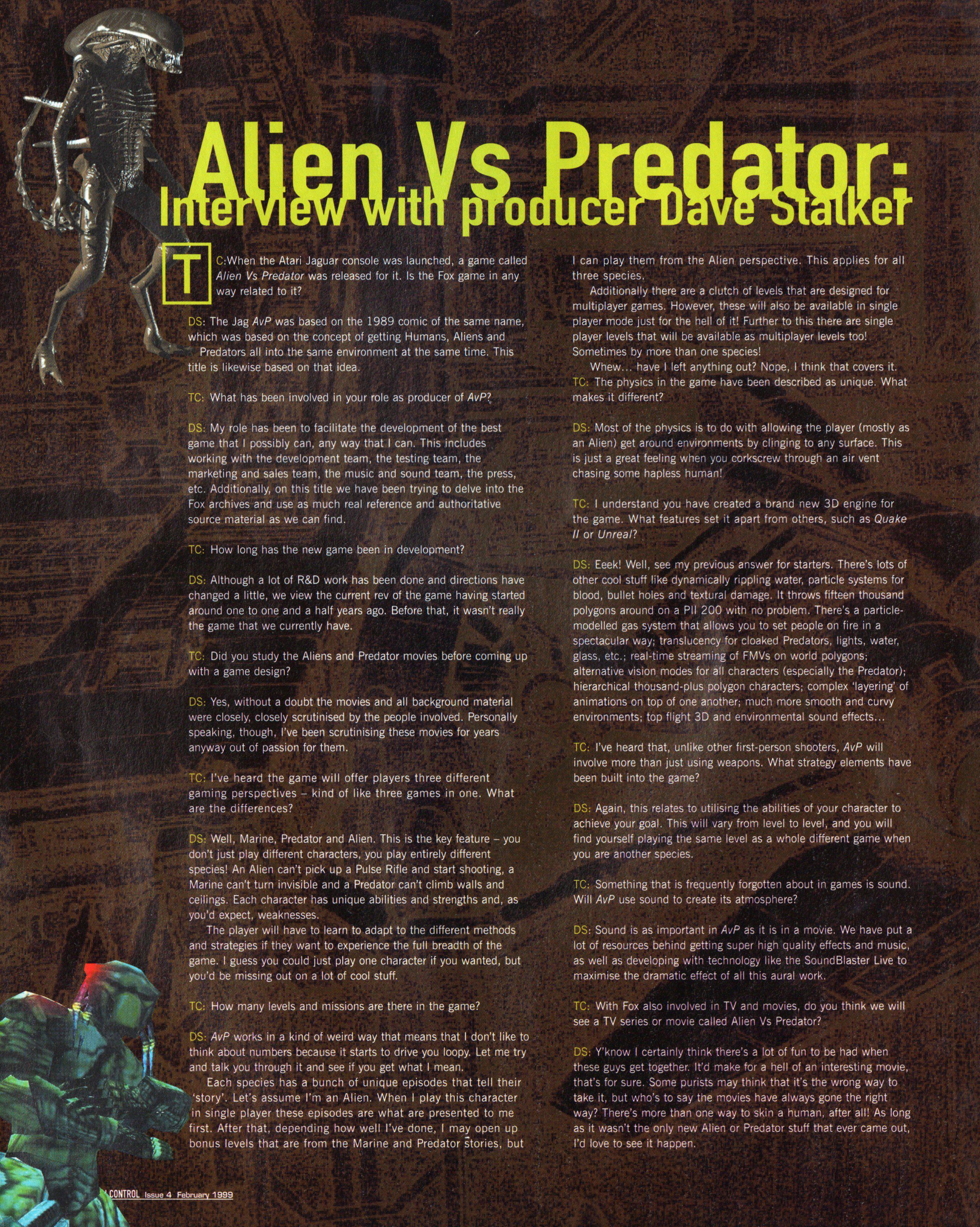
As the human Colonial Marine, you will have the hardest task of all. You have just returned from a solo training mission, and you have used up all of your equipment. You will have to find new weapons and ammunition before you can proceed with your mission, which is to locate five data tapes containing

the research records before setting the base self-destruct device and getting off the planet before it explodes.

The levels are well-designed, with a non-linear approach which can have you re-visiting a location several times during the course of a game. The scenery looks appropriate to the Alien movies, with a kind of industrial heavy metal theme. This is not simply a shoot-'em-up; you will need to use your head to stay alive. If you go up against the Aliens with all guns blazing, you won't last long.

Alien versus Predator is also designed to be played on-line, with opponents taking on the three different roles in the game in what should be a pretty interesting deathmatch. When you don't know what form your enemies are going to be, you can't really prepare for them. Details of the on-line game options are not yet available, but expect something a bit different. *Alien versus Predator* will be released in the spring of 1999.





Alien Vs Predator:

Interview with producer Dave Stalker

TC: When the Atari Jaguar console was launched, a game called *Alien Vs Predator* was released for it. Is the Fox game in any way related to it?

DS: The Jag *AvP* was based on the 1989 comic of the same name, which was based on the concept of getting Humans, Aliens and Predators all into the same environment at the same time. This title is likewise based on that idea.

TC: What has been involved in your role as producer of *AvP*?

DS: My role has been to facilitate the development of the best game that I possibly can, any way that I can. This includes working with the development team, the testing team, the marketing and sales team, the music and sound team, the press, etc. Additionally, on this title we have been trying to delve into the Fox archives and use as much real reference and authoritative source material as we can find.

TC: How long has the new game been in development?

DS: Although a lot of R&D work has been done and directions have changed a little, we view the current rev of the game having started around one to one and a half years ago. Before that, it wasn't really the game that we currently have.

TC: Did you study the *Aliens* and *Predator* movies before coming up with a game design?

DS: Yes, without a doubt the movies and all background material were closely, closely scrutinised by the people involved. Personally speaking, though, I've been scrutinising these movies for years anyway out of passion for them.

TC: I've heard the game will offer players three different gaming perspectives – kind of like three games in one. What are the differences?

DS: Well, Marine, Predator and Alien. This is the key feature – you don't just play different characters, you play entirely different species! An Alien can't pick up a Pulse Rifle and start shooting, a Marine can't turn invisible and a Predator can't climb walls and ceilings. Each character has unique abilities and strengths and, as you'd expect, weaknesses.

The player will have to learn to adapt to the different methods and strategies if they want to experience the full breadth of the game. I guess you could just play one character if you wanted, but you'd be missing out on a lot of cool stuff.

TC: How many levels and missions are there in the game?

DS: *AvP* works in a kind of weird way that means that I don't like to think about numbers because it starts to drive you loopy. Let me try and talk you through it and see if you get what I mean.

Each species has a bunch of unique episodes that tell their 'story'. Let's assume I'm an Alien. When I play this character in single player these episodes are what are presented to me first. After that, depending how well I've done, I may open up bonus levels that are from the Marine and Predator stories, but

I can play them from the Alien perspective. This applies for all three species.

Additionally there are a clutch of levels that are designed for multiplayer games. However, these will also be available in single player mode just for the hell of it! Further to this there are single player levels that will be available as multiplayer levels too! Sometimes by more than one species!

Whew... have I left anything out? Nope, I think that covers it.

TC: The physics in the game have been described as unique. What makes it different?

DS: Most of the physics is to do with allowing the player (mostly as an Alien) get around environments by clinging to any surface. This is just a great feeling when you corkscrew through an air vent chasing some hapless human!

TC: Understand you have created a brand new 3D engine for the game. What features set it apart from others, such as *Quake II* or *Unreal*?

DS: Eeek! Well, see my previous answer for starters. There's lots of other cool stuff like dynamically rippling water, particle systems for blood, bullet holes and textural damage. It throws fifteen thousand polygons around on a PII 200 with no problem. There's a particle-modelled gas system that allows you to set people on fire in a spectacular way; translucency for cloaked Predators, lights, water, glass, etc.; real-time streaming of FMVs on world polygons; alternative vision modes for all characters (especially the Predator); hierarchical thousand-plus polygon characters; complex 'layering' of animations on top of one another; much more smooth and curvy environments; top flight 3D and environmental sound effects...

TC: I've heard that, unlike other first-person shooters, *AvP* will involve more than just using weapons. What strategy elements have been built into the game?

DS: Again, this relates to utilising the abilities of your character to achieve your goal. This will vary from level to level, and you will find yourself playing the same level as a whole different game when you are another species.

TC: Something that is frequently forgotten about in games is sound. Will *AvP* use sound to create its atmosphere?

DS: Sound is as important in *AvP* as it is in a movie. We have put a lot of resources behind getting super high quality effects and music, as well as developing with technology like the SoundBlaster Live to maximise the dramatic effect of all this aural work.

TC: With Fox also involved in TV and movies, do you think we will see a TV series or movie called *Alien Vs Predator*?

DS: Y'know I certainly think there's a lot of fun to be had when these guys get together. It'd make for a hell of an interesting movie, that's for sure. Some purists may think that it's the wrong way to take it, but who's to say the movies have always gone the right way? There's more than one way to skin a human, after all! As long as it wasn't the only new Alien or Predator stuff that ever came out, I'd love to see it happen.

Alien Resurrection



The **series of Aliens films** has steadily **gotten worse** as the years have passed, and yet, strangely, the **games** based on them are still getting **better and better...**

PC owners are rightly getting very excited at the moment about a forthcoming game from Fox Interactive called *Alien Versus Predator*. This is a first-person game allowing you to play as either an Alien, a Predator or a Colonial Marine. So far it's been looking very impressive – much more so than the PlayStation's previous Aliens game, *Alien Trilogy*, which appeared back in the far off days of PlayStation history (so long ago in fact that it's been available on Platinum for quite some time). Now Fox have started the PR hype concerning their latest Aliens game, *Alien Resurrection*.

This is based around the eponymous film that saw Ripley return from death as a human-alien hybrid and her

Deep space yonder

The game will be played in the third-person perspective with a 'smart camera' that will adjust your position to give the player the best view of the action as you race down the corridors of the Auriga, the ship that the game is set on. The action will kick off just after some aliens escape and start to kill their way through both the ship's crew and the contingent of marines on board as well. All the while, the deranged Dr. Wren is continuing his diabolical genetic experiments in preparation for his expected return to Earth.

The gameplay itself is promised to involve more than your standard 'run around and shoot the aliens' style, with you needing to work in tandem with 'Father', the ship's

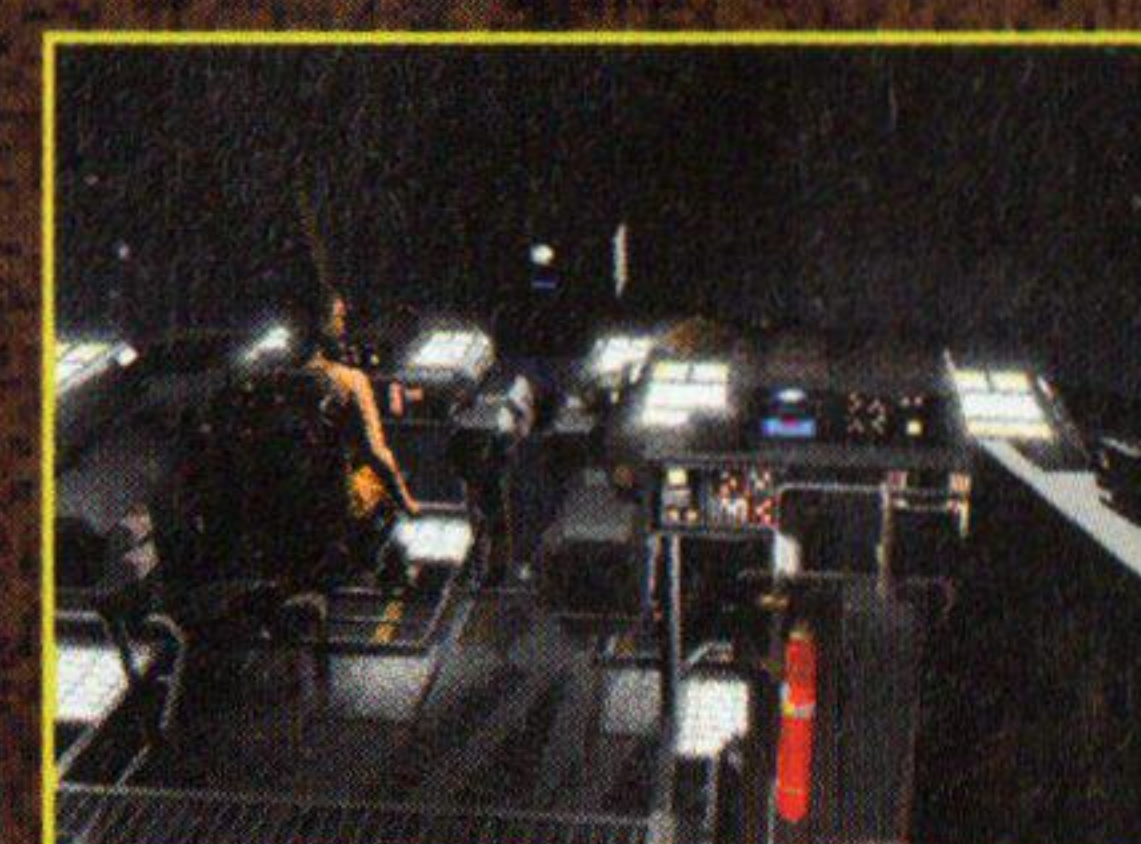
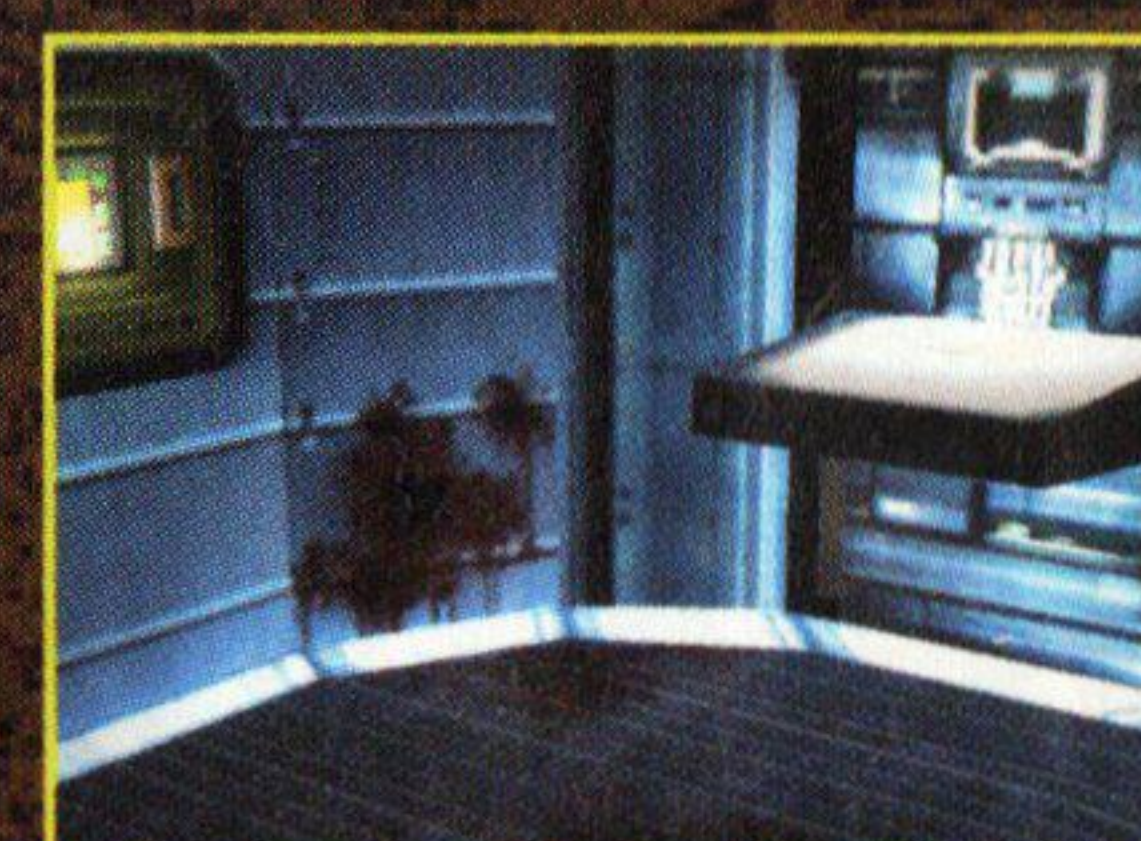
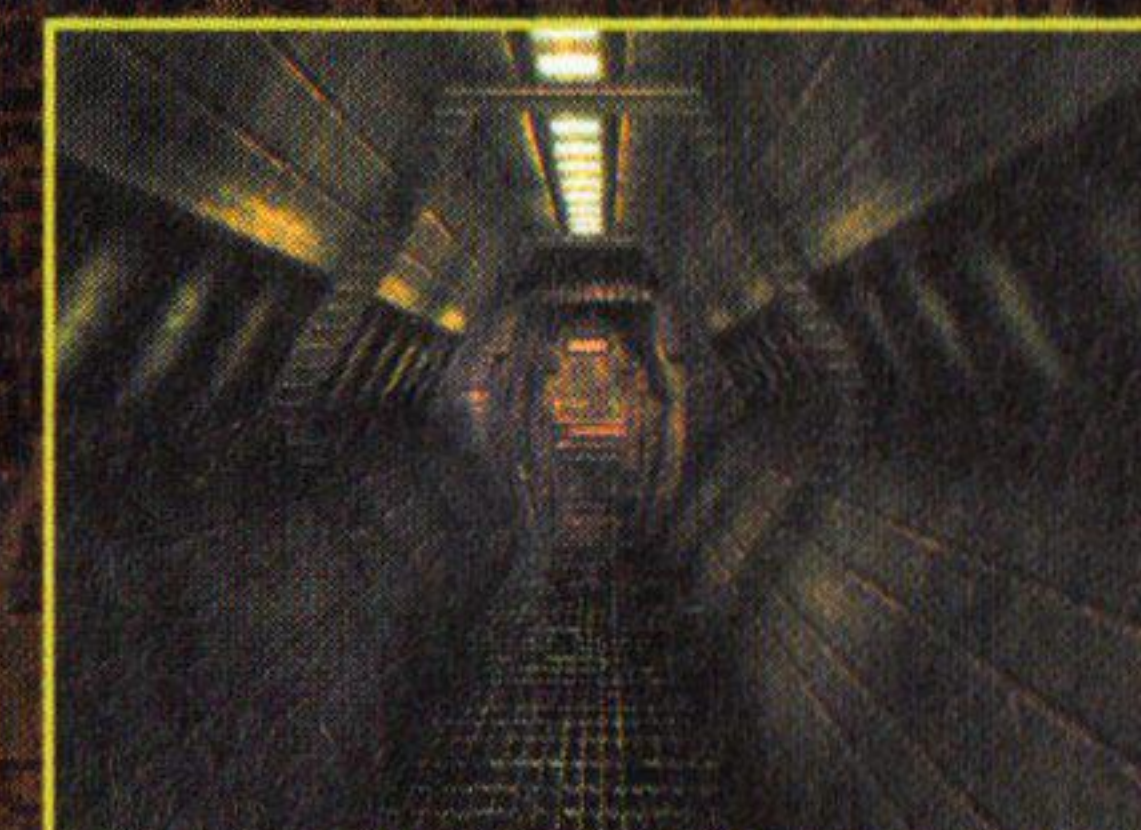
omnipresent talking computer. The computer will call for you to complete

TO GIVE IT A SENSE OF URGENCY, YOU'RE ALSO TRYING TO DESTROY THE SHIP BEFORE IT REACHES EARTH AND THE ALIENS ESCAPE – A TERRIFYING PROSPECT!

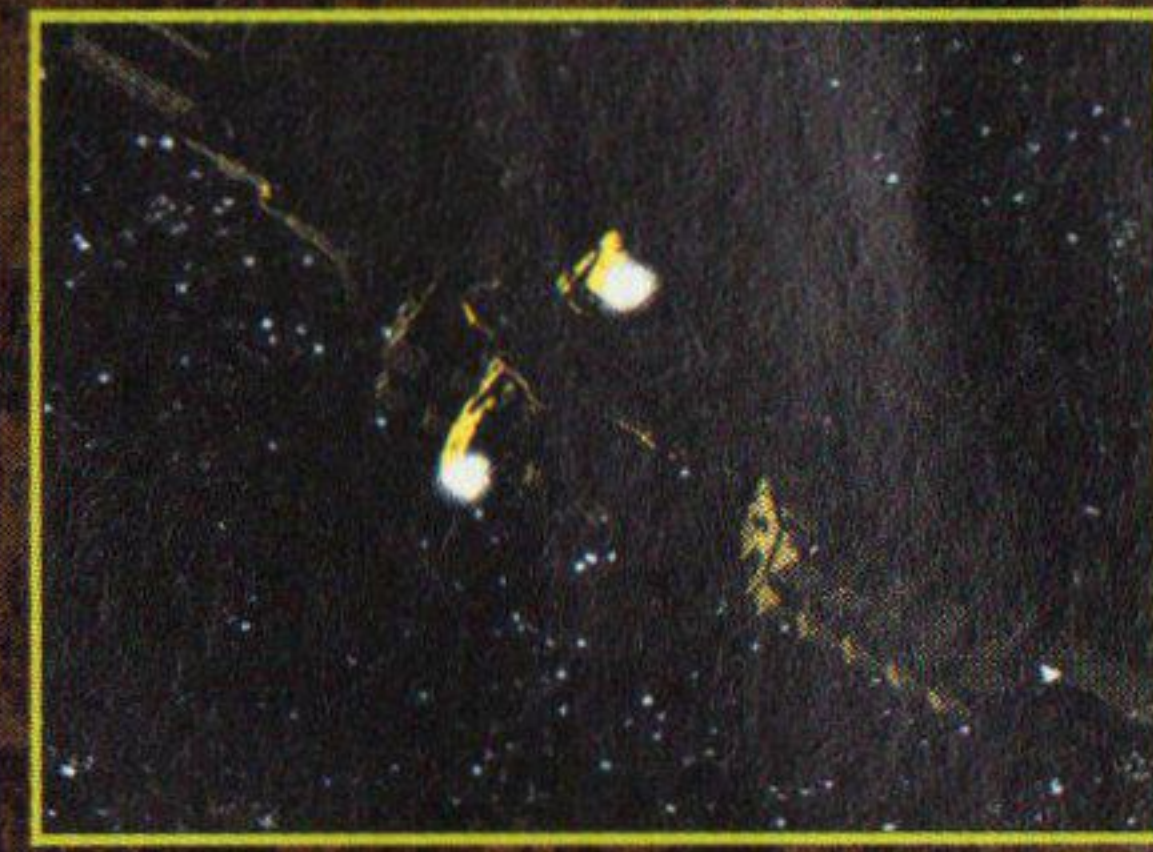
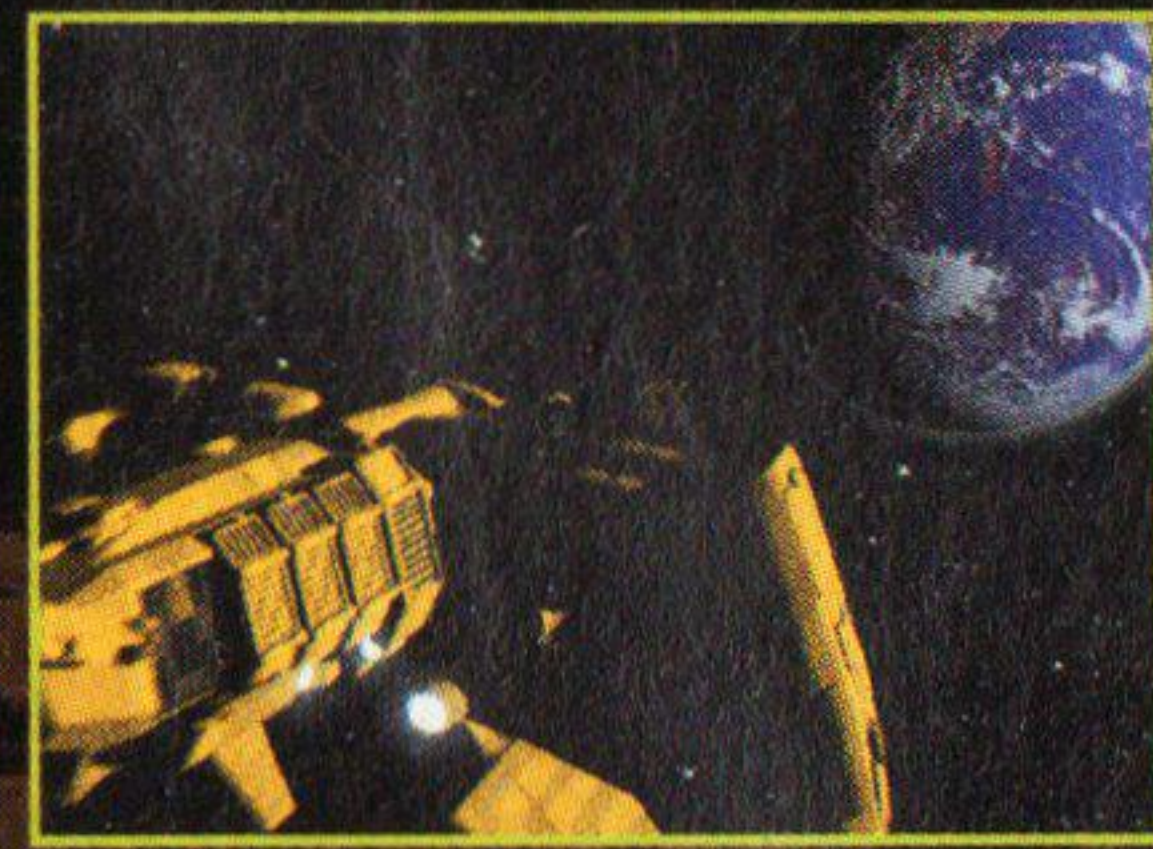
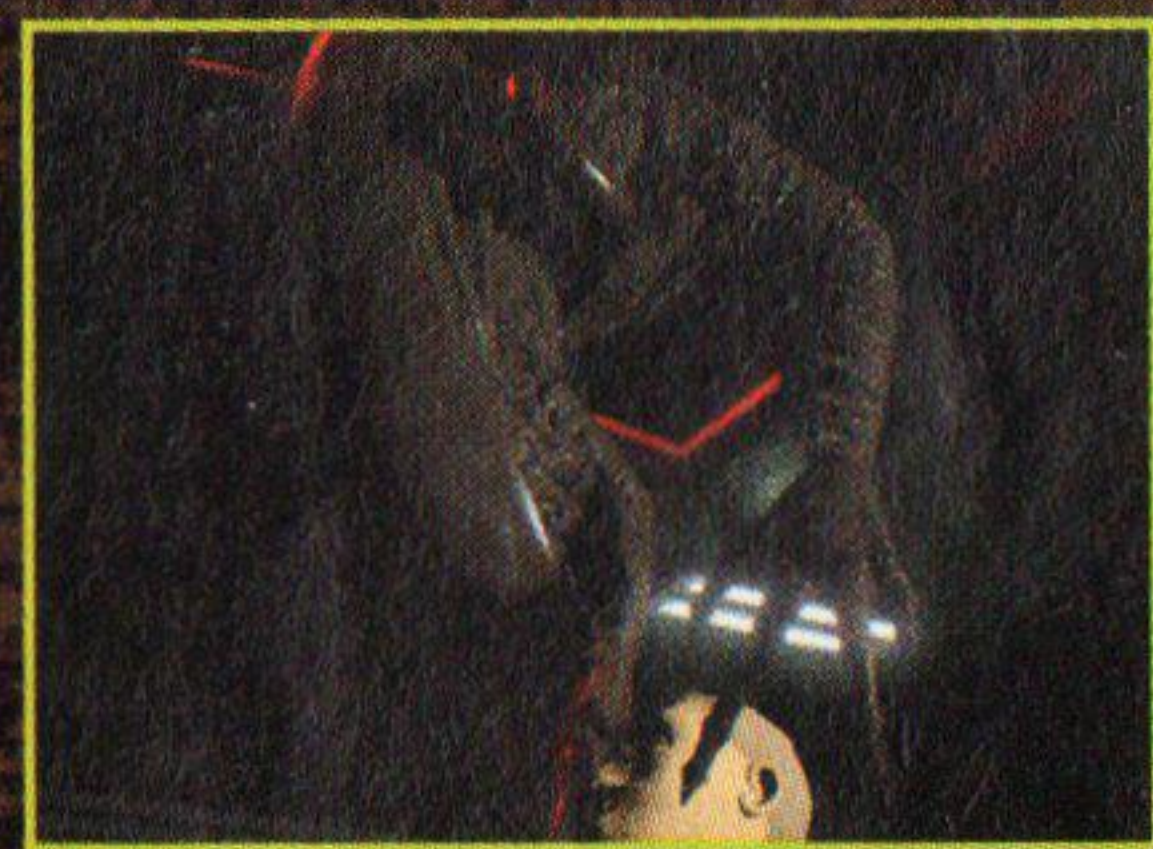
efforts to kill more aliens (this time genetically modified by the mysterious 'Company') and help a crew of mercenaries escape. It all took place aboard a military research vessel and featured all manner of genetic experiments, new aliens (and plenty of them) and a new and improved Ripley. The film wasn't very well-received by the critics and didn't exactly break any records at the box office. Perhaps this was because the story wasn't the most original, or that the French director Jean-Pierre Jeunet, famous for his weird films like *Delicatessen* and *The City Of Lost Children*, was a bit too original for American audiences. Nonetheless, no matter how much of a letdown the film was, Fox are still quite happily churning out Aliens-related computer games. This new one comes out almost two years after the film's release, but don't worry because it looks like Fox have been using every available minute of this time in making *Alien Resurrection* a potential smash-hit title.

specific tasks and missions in each level until you can eventually destroy the evil Dr Wren's mutated human embryo experiments. To give the game a sense of urgency, you're also trying to destroy the ship before it reaches Earth and the aliens escape – a terrifying prospect!

There will be thirteen levels in all, each with different backgrounds as befitting the different areas of the ship, from the crew areas to engine rooms to the dark underbelly with its cargo holds. To complete the levels you will have to play as one of five different playable characters. Obviously one of these will be Ripley, but there will also be the option to play as one of four of the mercenary characters, like the one in the wheelchair or Winona Ryder's character. You'll also be provided with an awesome array of weaponry from measly pistols right up to flame-throwers, smart guns and even more heavy duty stuff, all lifted straight from the films to give the game an authentic feel. Indeed, at this point the graphics



The highly detailed starship interiors give the game a gritty and realistic feel, just like the movies



You get to play a wide choice of characters from the film, all with different special abilities



seem like they could be impressive enough in the look and feel, like the film. Judging by these screenshots, you can make your own mind up, although bear in mind that Fox have a reputation for a high standard of graphics. Even *Alien TrilogY* on this platform doesn't look too bad for its age.

One of the most intriguing prospects of this game is the fact that due to the game engine employed, the environments will be fully destructible and the player can blow up or damage almost anything. To some extent this was seen in *Alien TrilogY*, with the glass being shot out and shower curtains being destroyed in the hunt for power-ups and ammo. To what extent you will be able to cause damage remains to be seen, but if the hype is to be believed, it will be on an unprecedented scale.

The best yet?

This hype is also making claims about the speed of the game, which it's promised will not let up at all and, coupled with the soundtrack to the game of dialogue and sound effects lifted from the movie itself, could well ensure that this game will be a heart-pounding experience when it appears early this year. The game certainly looks to be one of the most impressive PlayStation games of recent times in terms of graphics (the cut scenes in particular are worth watching out for) and the sound effects. What remains to be seen is how well the final product plays – will it be the next *Resident Evil* or *Gran Turismo*, or will it simply follow the film and be a disaster? Fox's record so far on the PlayStation – with games like *Alien TrilogY*, *Croc* and the *Die Hard TrilogY* being their most successful – seems to suggest that *Alien Resurrection* will be a game to watch for in 1999. Find out if this is true with our review some time soon.

Alien Invasion

For those of you who have been in **deep-space hibernation** for the past **twenty years**, here's a brief look at the **screen history** of the **Aliens** and the **Predator**...

Alien (1979)

Directed by Ridley Scott

Starring Sigourney Weaver, John Hurt, Ian Holm,

Harry Dean Stanton and Tom Skerritt

The first of the Alien movies was far more a horror film than it was science fiction. Echoing the monster movies of the fifties, it features the discovery of an unstoppable alien creature which metamorphoses from the embryonic face-hugger to the gigantic acid-dripping nightmare which stalks the hapless crew of the *Nostromo* through the claustrophobic corridors of their doomed ship. It borrows elements from the slasher movies such as *Halloween*, as one by one the minor characters wander off into the darkness to be killed off ("Here kitty!") until only the heroine Ripley and Jones, the ship's cat, survive. At the end of the film she believes she has killed off the monster, but of course it returns in the sequel.



Aliens (1986)

Directed by James Cameron

Starring Sigourney Weaver, Carrie Henn, Michael Biehn,

Paul Reiser and Lance Henriksen



The sequel finds Ripley returning to the Alien's home planet with a bunch of macho and over-confident Colonial Marines. They set out to wipe out the

creatures, but of course they have the tables turned on them when it turns out that there are hundreds of the beasts swarming around the place. Contains the coolest line ever in a movie: "I say we take off and nuke the site from orbit – it's the only way to be really sure." This time Ripley manages to rescue one Marine, a little girl and a mangled android before everything blows up. Won an Oscar for visual effects.

Predator (1987)

Directed by John McTiernan

Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Carl Weathers, Elpidia Carrillo and Bill Duke

An elite special forces commando team are sent on a rescue mission to the jungles of Central America, but find themselves being hunted down by an invisible enemy. This turns out to be an alien hunter, who has stopped off on earth to gather a few trophies. The Predator (for it is he) picks off the commandos one by one with a variety of nasty alien weapons, until only Arnie is left. By use of low cunning and a few Ewok-style traps, Big Arn is eventually victorious, emerging virtually unscathed from ground zero of a nuclear explosion. Well, he is a hero after all.



Predator 2 (1990)

Directed by Stephen Hopkin

Starring Danny Glover, Gary Busey, Ruben Blades and Maria Conchita Alonso



This sequel follows the alien trophy hunter to Los Angeles, where he faces Danny Glover, who plays (surprise, surprise) an aging cop. There's lots of action and explosions, but although he gives it his best shot, Danny Glover is no Arnie, and you keep expecting Mel Gibson to turn up and shoot something. Contains some great stunts and the essential nineties ingredients of government conspiracy and secret research, but is ultimately not as satisfying as the first movie.

Alien 3 (1992)

Directed by David Fincher

Starring Sigourney Weaver, Charles Dutton, Charles Dance, Paul McGann and Brian Glover

This time Ripley finds herself marooned on a desolate prison planet, the only woman amongst a small group of male convicts. She has to fight the Alien Queen without the benefit of the usual armoury of exotic weapons, which are banned in the prison, and without her hair. The attempts at some dark religious imagery fall a bit flat, but the camera work is superb. The story has elements of conspiracy theory and attempts to tie the previous movies together into a single plot. Again, all the minor characters are killed off during the course of the film, and at the end Ripley dives into a vat of molten metal, taking the alien embryo inside her to a fiery death.

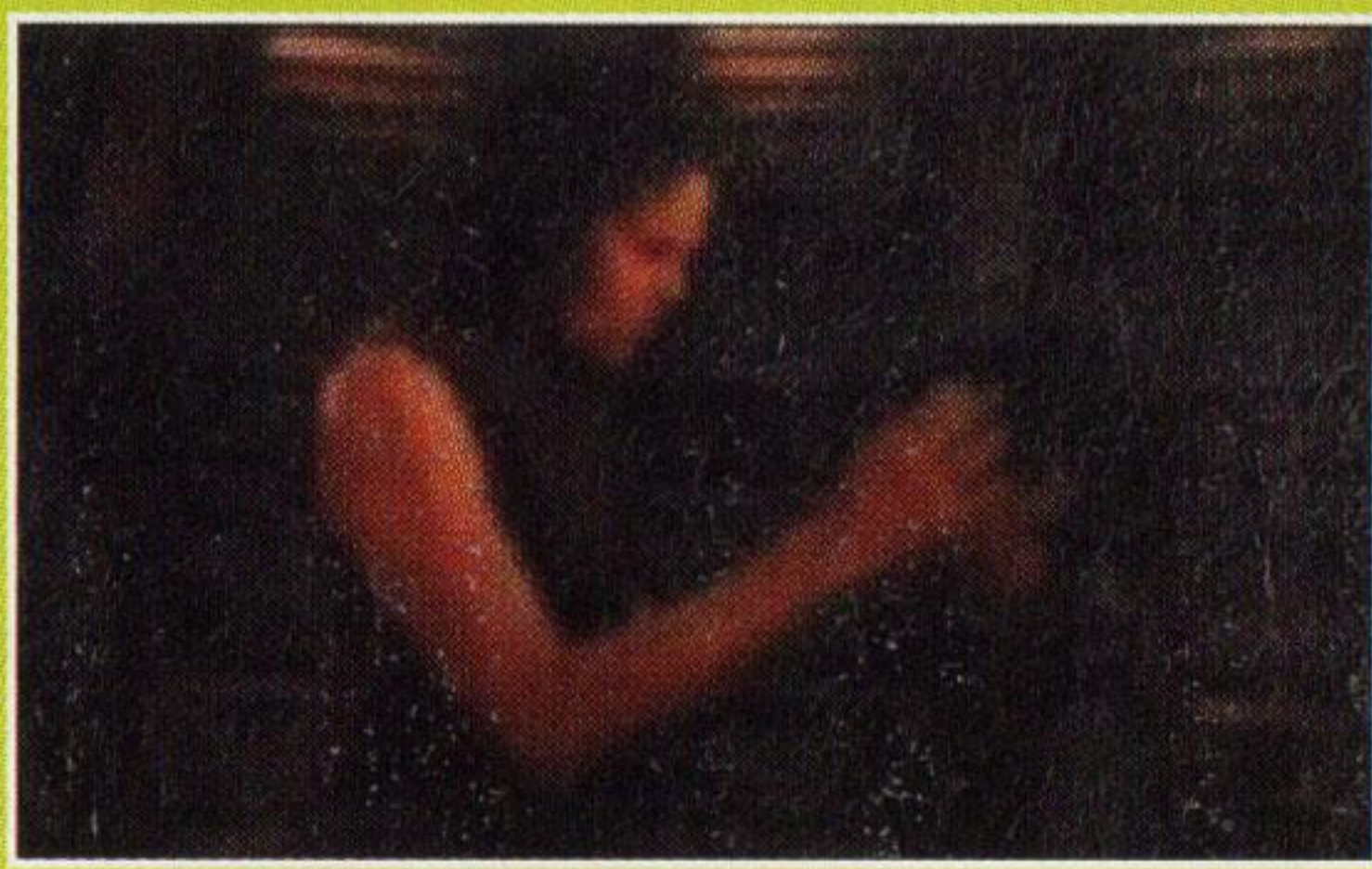


Alien Resurrection (1997)

Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet

Starring Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Dominique Pinon, Ron Perlman and Michael Wincott

After two hundred years, Ellen Ripley is brought back from the dead by the use of cloning technology, and is once again thrown into battle with her Xenomorph nemesis. This time she teams up with a group of renegade smugglers to thwart plans to cross-breed Aliens with humans in a plot to create the ultimate fighting machines. Ripley has her strength enhanced by the effects of the Alien DNA in her body, but the rest of the cast are pretty weak, with the exception of the lovely Winona Ryder, who I am in love with. Sigh...



VIDEO GAMES CHEATS & TIPS

A-Z LISTING OF CHEATS FOR ALMOST EVERY PSX, N64 & PC GAME INCLUDING:



PLAYSTATION GAMES

Abe's Oddysee
Actua Soccer 1 & 2
Adidas Power Soccer
Agile Warrior F-111X
Bio Frenks
Bloody Roar
Bomberman World
Bubsy 3D
Bushido Blade 1 & 2
Bust a Move 1, 2 & 3
Cardinal Syn
Circuit Breakers
Colin McRae Rally
Colony Wars
Command & Conquer Series
Coolboarders 1 & 2
Courier Crisis
Crash Bandicoot 1, 2 & 3
Crime Killer
Croc
Dark Forces
Darklight Conflict
Dead or Alive
Death Trap Dungeon
Descent
Destruction Derby 1 & 2
Diablo
Die Hard 1, 2 & 3
Doom
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill
Duke Nukem: Total Meltdown
Fifa 96, 97 & 98
Fighting Force
Final Doom
Final Fantasy VII
Formula 1
Formula 1 97 & 98
Forsaken
Gex 1 & 3D
G-Police
Gran Turismo
Grand Theft Auto
Hexen
Jersey Devil
Jet Rider
Jonah Lomu Rugby
Jumping Flash 1 & 2
King of Fighters 95, 96 & 97
Klonoa
Kula World
Lemmings 3D
Loaded
Lucky Luke
Madden 97, 98 & 99
Mass Destruction
MDK
Mecha Warrior 2
Metal Gear Solid
Micro Machines v3
Mortal Kombat 1, 3, 4 & Trilogy
Moto Racer 1 & 2
N20
Nagano Winter Olympics 98
Nanotek Warrior
Nascar Racing 98 & 99
NBA Live 96, 97 & 98
NBA Shootout 96, 97 & 98
NBA Zone 1, 2 & 98
Need for Speed 1, 2 & 3
NFL Face Off 97
NFL Face Off 98
NFL Game-day 97, 98 & 99
NHL 97 & 98
Nightmare Creatures
Nuclear Strike
One
Pandemonium 1 & 2
Parappa the Rapper
Pitfall 1 & 3D
Porsche Challenge
Pro Pinball
Project Overkill
Rage Racer
Rally Cross
Rapid Racer
Rascal
Ray Racers
Ray Storm
Rayman
Reboot
Resident Evil 1 & 2
Ridge Racer
Road Rash 1 & 3D
Rosco McQueen
Shadowmaster
Soul Blade
Soviet Strike
Speed Racer
Speedster
Spider
Spyro the Dragon
Star Fighter
Steel Reign
Street Fighter Alpha 1, 2 & 3
Ex Plus Alpha
Street Racer
Suikoden
Tekken 1, 2 & 3
Tempest X3
Tennis Arena
Test Drive 4, 5 & Off Road
Tetris Plus
The Lost World
Theme Hospital
Three Lions
Time Crisis
Tobal No. 1 & 2
TOCA
Tomb Raider 1 & 2
Tommi Makinen Rally
Toshinden 1, 2 & 3
Total Drivin
Triple Play 97, 98 & 99
Twisted Metal 1, 2 & 3
Victory Boxing
Vigilante 8
VR Baseball 97
VR Powerboat Racing
V Rally
Vs
V Tennis
War Gods
War Craft 2: The Dark Saga
War Hammer: Dark Omen
WCW Nitro

WCW Vs the World
Wipeout 1 & 2097
World Cup 98
World League Soccer 98
Worms
WWF in the House
WWF War Zone
WWF Wrestlemania
X-Com Terror from Deep
Xevious 3D G+
Zero Divide 1 & 2

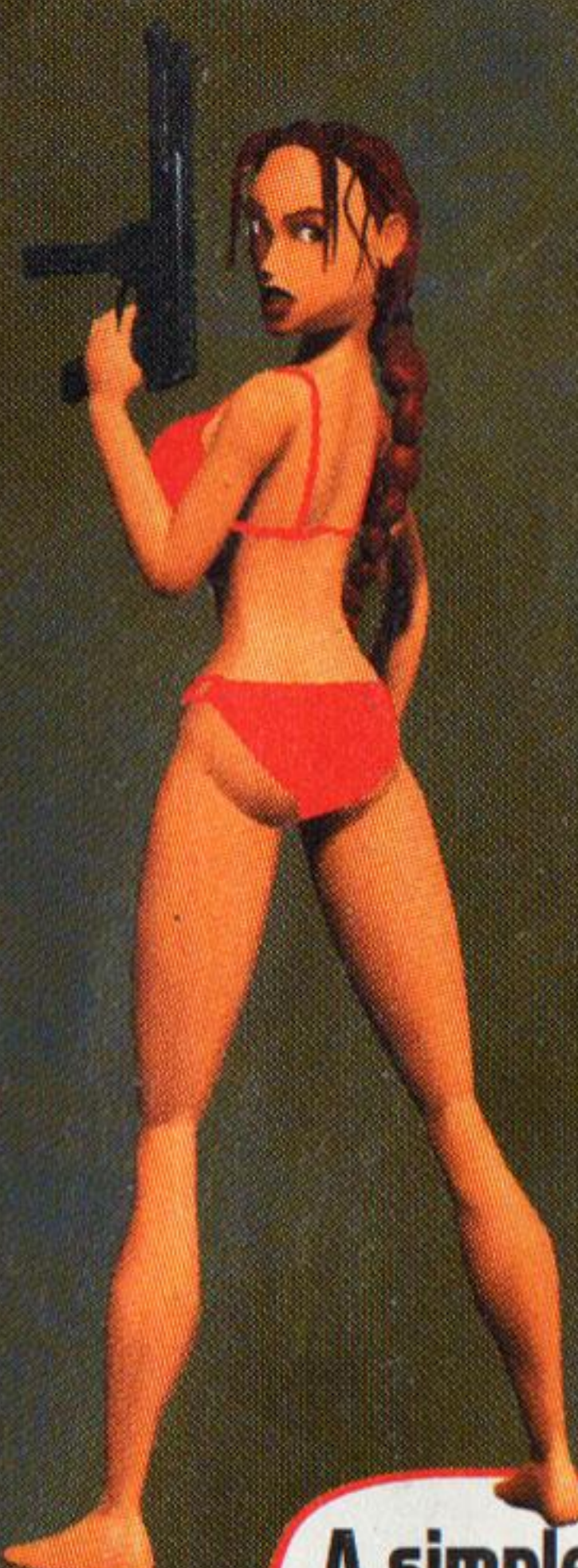
N64 GAMES

All-Star Baseball 99
Banjo Kazooie
Bio Frenks
Blast Corps
Body Harvest
Bomberman 64
Bust a Move 2
Dark Rift
Diddy Kong Racing
Doom 64
Duke Nukem 64
Extreme G 1 & 2
F1 Pole Position
F1 World Grand Prix
Fifa 64 & 98
Fighters Destiny
Forsaken
Gex
Golden Eye
GT64 Championship Edition
Hexen
Iggy's Reckin Balls
International Super Soccer
ISS 98
Killer Instinct Gold
Lylat Wars
Mace: The Dark Ages
Madden 64
Madden NFL 99
Mario Karts
Mission Impossible
Mortal Kombat 4, Sub Zero & Trilogy
Multi-Racing Championship
Mystical Ninja: Starring Goemon
Nagano Olympic Hockey
Nagano Winter Olympics 98
Nascar Racing 99
NBA Courtside
NBA Hangtime
NBA Zone 98
NFL Breakaway
NFL Quarterback 98
NHL 99
Off-Road Challenge
Pilot Wings
Puyo Puyo Sun 64
Quake 64
Rampage World Tour
Snowboard Kids
Super Mario
1080 Snowboarding
Top Gear Rally
Turok 1 & 2
War Gods
Wave Race
WCW Vs NWO 1 & 2
World Cup 98
WWF War Zone
Yoshi's Story
Zelda

PC GAMES

Abe's Oddysee
Age Of Empires
Alien Trilogy
Caesar

Caesar 2
Cannon Fodder
Carmaggedon
Championship Manager 97/98
Colin McRae Rally
Command & Conquer
Command & Conquer: Red Alert
Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines
Deathtrap Dungeon
Destruction Derby
Destruction Derby 2
Doom
Doom 2
Duke Nukem 3D
Excalibur 2555 A.D.
Fifa 96, 97 & 98
Final Doom
Final Fantasy VII
Formula 1
Forsaken
G Police
Grand Theft Auto
Hexen 1 & 2
Interstate 76
Jedi Knight
Klingon Honor Guard
Mecha Commander
Monster Truck Madness
Mortal Kombat 4
Moto Racer
Motorhead
Microsoft Flight Sim 98
Nuclear Strike
Need for Speed 3
POD
Premier Manager 3
Quake 1 & 2
Railroad Tycoon 2
Rayman
Resident Evil
Screamer Rally
Test Drive 4
Theme Hospital
TOCA Touring Car Champ
Tomb Raider 1 & 2
Turok
Unreal
Wipeout
Wipeout 2097
World Cup 98
Worms
Worms 2
WWF Wrestlemania
X Files: The Game



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PRESS * TO RESTART SERVICE

PRESS # TO MOVE BACK ONE STEP

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CHEATS FOR 500+ GAMES

A simple call and you've got the cheat

GAMES TESTED

074	VIVA Football
076	Blood 2
078	Nightmare Creatures
080	Heretic II
082	War of the Worlds
084	Metal Gear Solid
086	Top Gear Overdrive
088	Asghan
090	Rakuga Kids
092	World War II Fighters
094	Kensai
096	The Golf Pro II
098	Max Power Racing
100	X-Wing Collector's Series



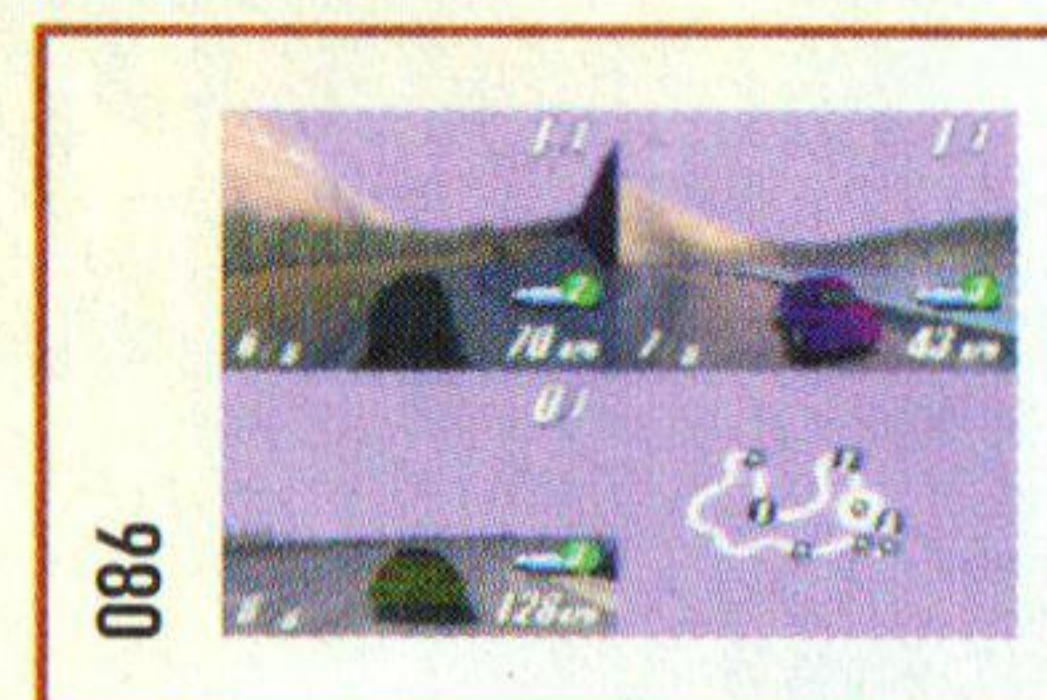
076



084



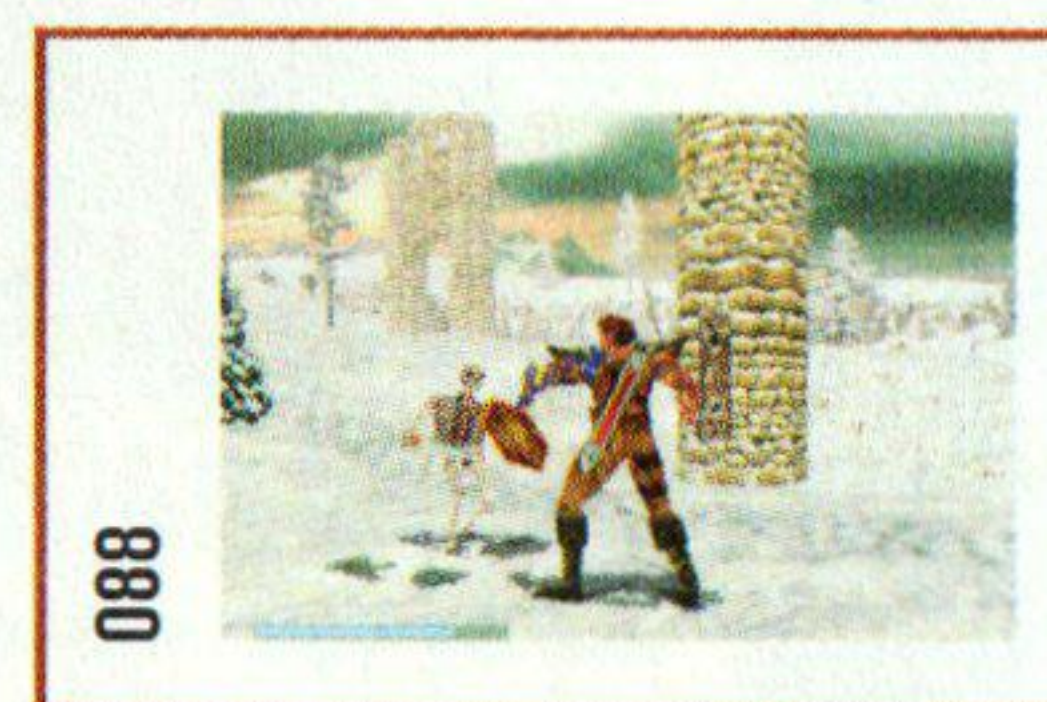
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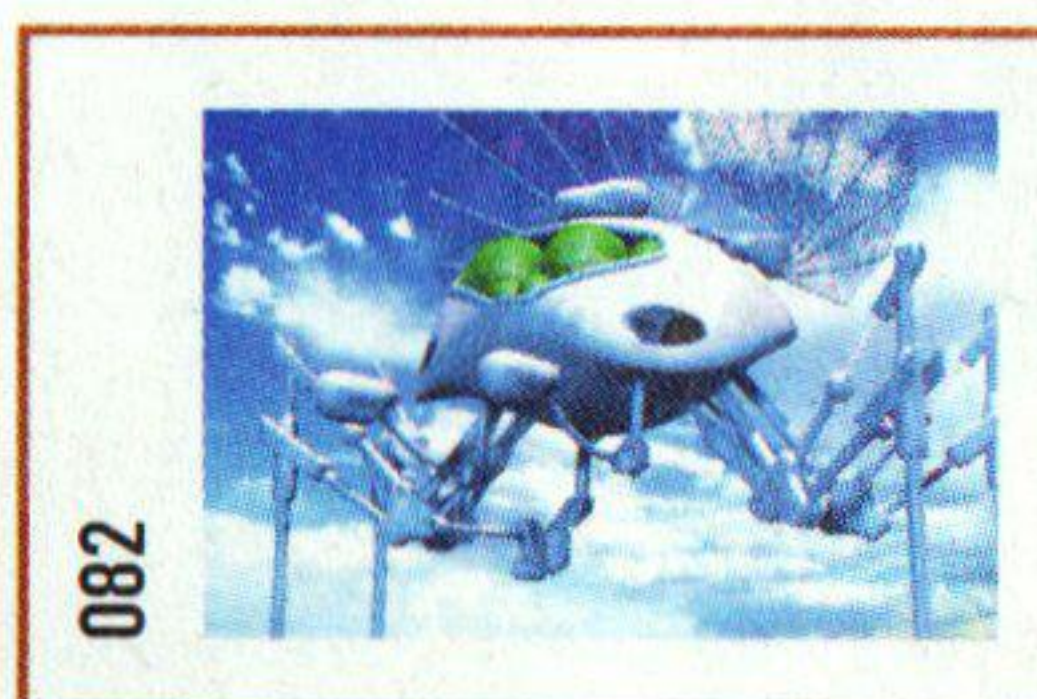
086



080



088



082



090

VERDICT RATINGS

25

50

75

0 - 25

26 - 50

51 - 75

76 - 100

Generally speaking the games falling into this category are so pig ugly that not even their own mothers could care less about them. Perhaps the problem is that the programmers felt the same way? Please consider any game receiving a rating this low to be hazardous to your mental health — we're not scoring it this badly for fun you know! You wouldn't believe the grief we get from publishers for giving out these scores, but we're here to serve you, nobody else.

A below average game, but one which at least has some redeeming features. Certain aspects of these titles might be on a par with those scoring more highly, but if a game scores below 50% you can assume that it is flawed when seen as a complete package. Die-hard fans of a particular genre might still enjoy these games, but as a general rule you'll be better off saving your money. We might get sent games for free, but you don't, and we won't forget that.

Any game that achieves a score of over 50% should be considered an above average title worthy of your attention — especially if you're a fan of the genre. Most of these titles will not disappoint, they probably just lack that certain something that separates a good game from a great game. Please note that as our method of scoring is different to those in other magazines, a similar score in another publication might not represent a product of comparable quality.

These are the games that make buying the systems they appear on worthwhile. A lot of games players have access to more than one format nowadays, and these games are the reason why. Games achieving scores of 90% and above in particular can be considered highly recommended. We won't be giving out scores that high too often, so if you're thinking of purchasing a game that we've seen fit to endorse in this way, what are you waiting for?

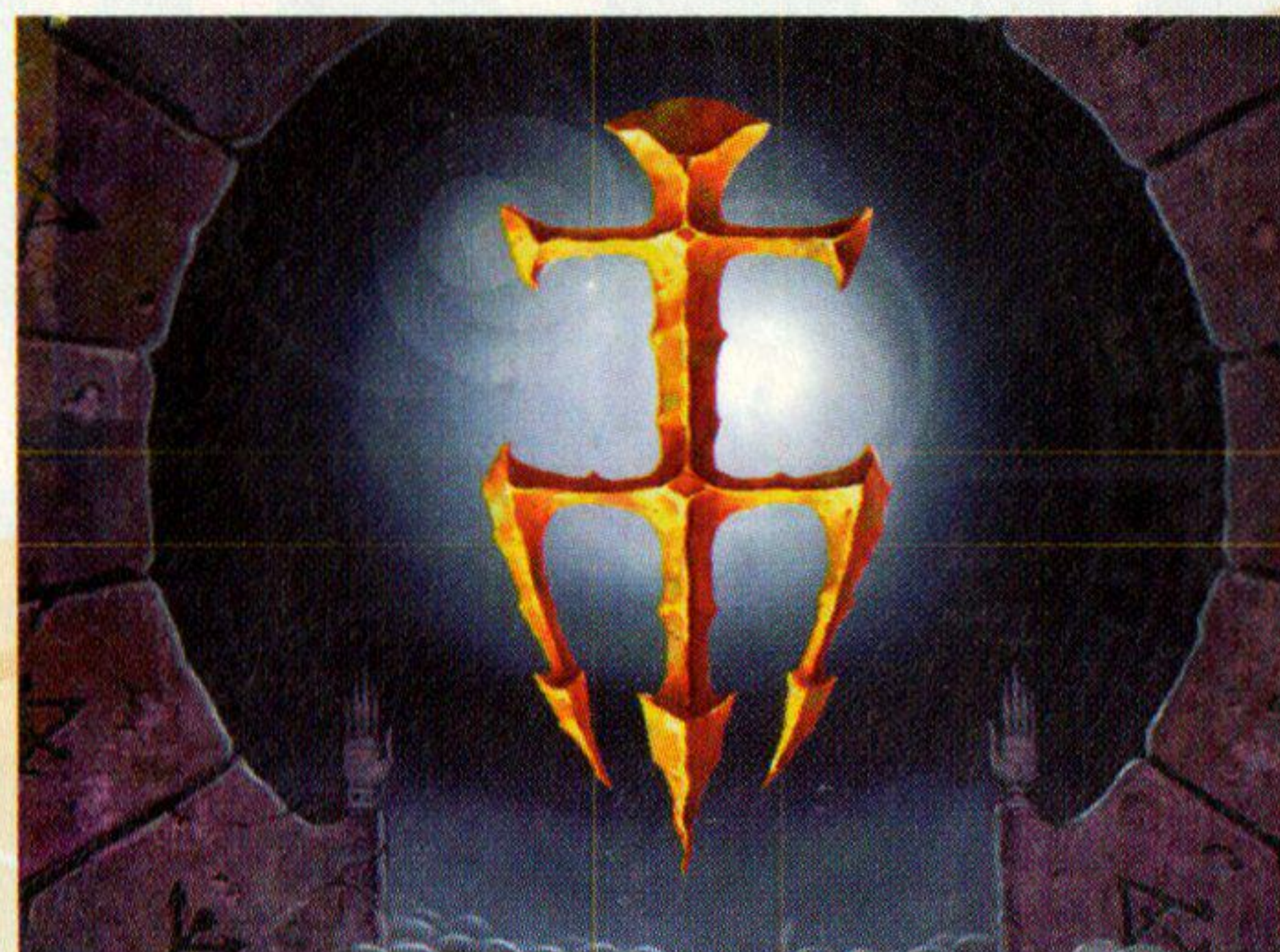
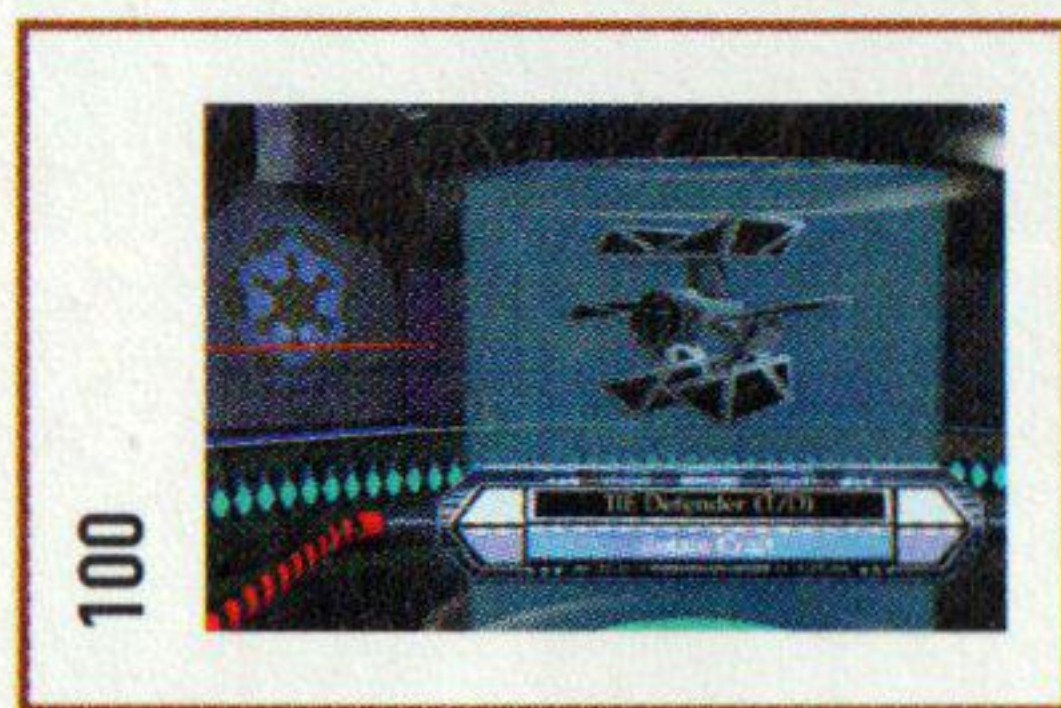
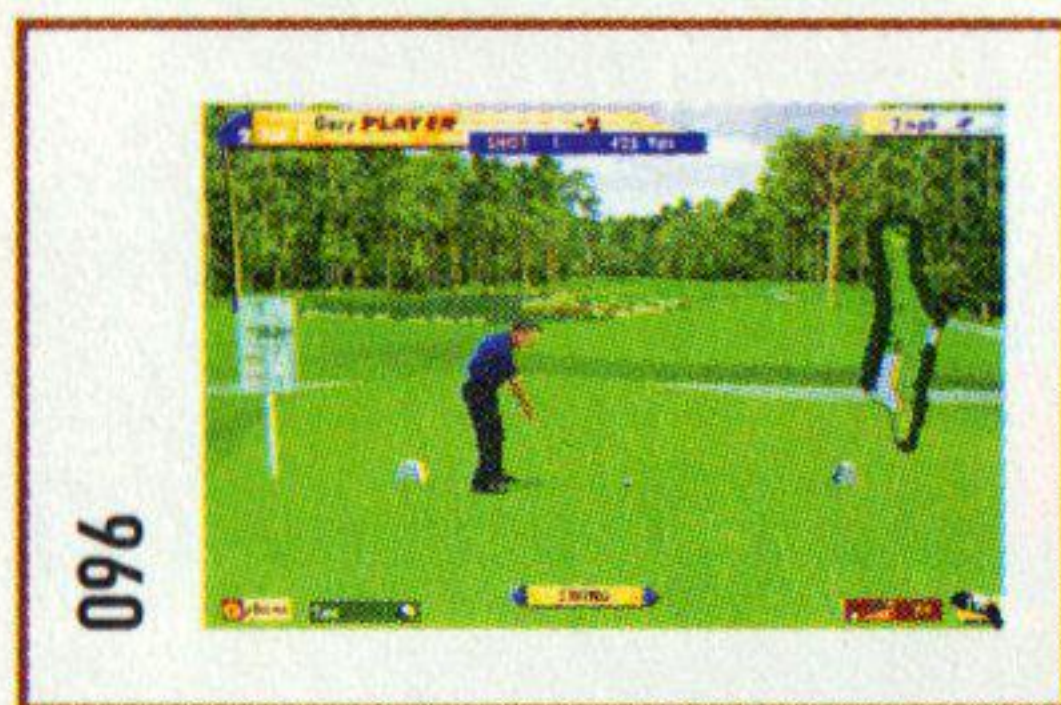
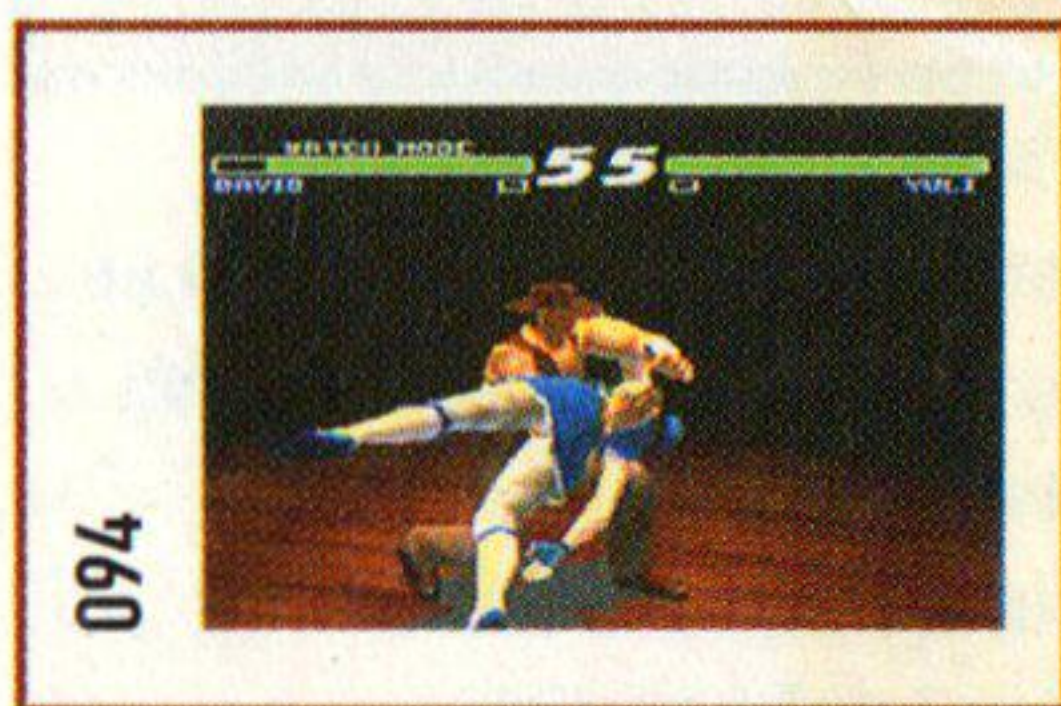
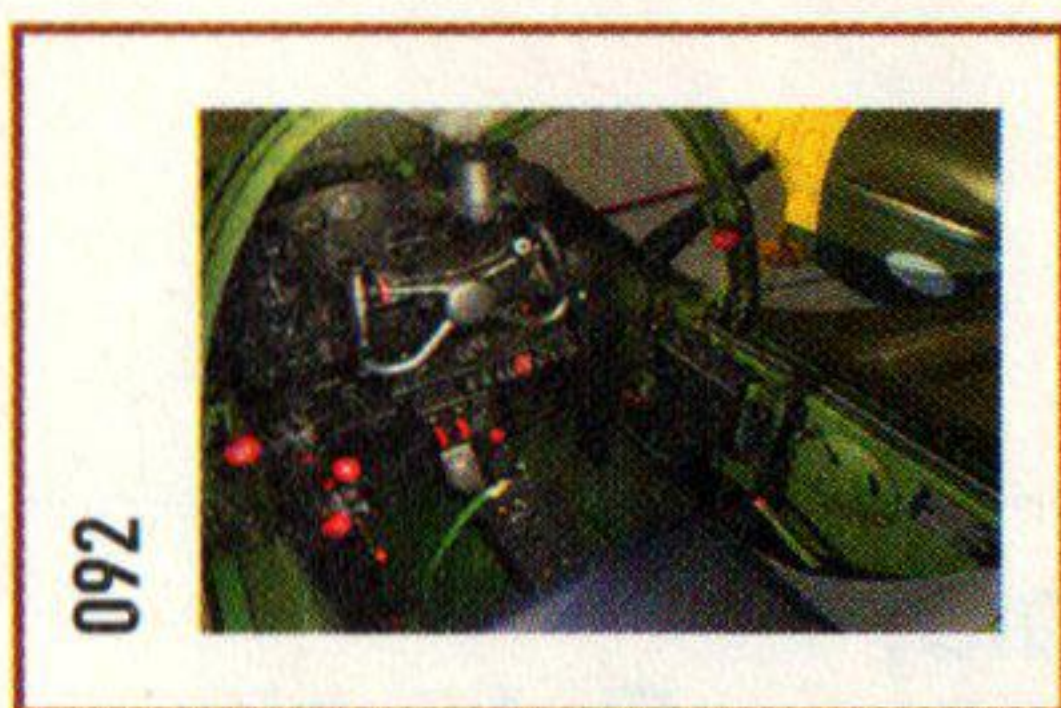
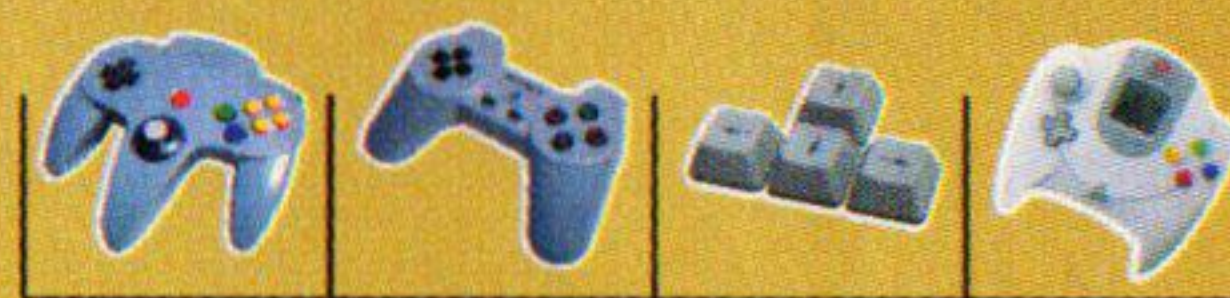


90+ AWARD

Not many of these to be found this month, but then that's what makes our award worth earning – it needs to be earnt, rather than bought or simply asked for!

QUALITY CONTROL

FORMATS



Heretic II

Activision's superb third-person sequel shows the likes of *Tomb Raider III* exactly how it should be done.

080



Top Gear Overdrive

Kemco's latest has turned out to be one of the better racers to hit the N64 recently.

086



Kensai

Konami have challenged Namco's *Tekken* series to a fight in the car park after the pub shuts.

094

TOTAL CONTROL CHARTS

Your chance to check out who has been signing out what from the Total CONTROL cupboard of delights. Guess which game we're playing on the network then...

Justin

1. Half-Life (PC)
2. The Legend of Zelda... (Nintendo 64)
3. Tekken 3 (PlayStation)
4. Virtua Fighter 3tb (Dreamcast)
5. Sonic Adventure (Dreamcast)

Will

1. Half-Life (PC)
2. The Legend of Zelda... (Nintendo 64)
3. Sonic Adventure (Dreamcast)
4. Heretic II (PC)
5. R-Type Delta (PlayStation)

Nick

1. Super Mario World (SNES)
2. Half-Life (PC)
3. Metal Gear Solid (PlayStation)
4. Mario Party (Nintendo 64)
5. Sonic Adventure (Dreamcast)

Cliff

1. Half-Life (PC)
2. King's Quest: Mask of Eternity (PC)
3. Anno 1602 (PC)
4. Thief: The Dark Project (PC)
5. EHRGEIZ (PlayStation)

INFORMATION

INFORMATION

PLATFORM	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Sony
DEVELOPER	Namco
STYLE	Beat-'em-up
RELEASE	£34.99
PRICE	Out Now
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	No
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block

This is where you can find out everything you need to know about the game reviewed. The information box is different for each format and includes everything from the release date and price to more specific details such as how many blocks it will take up on your PlayStation memory card or whether the game takes advantage of your Nintendo 64 Rumble Pak. Note that the PC version of the box will occasionally contain both the minimum and recommended specifications required to run the game.

MAKING CONTROL

TAKING CONTROL

You need only watch the intro sequence to understand just how special *Tekken 3* really is. With all the style of a Hollywood blockbuster, it grabs you by the throat and draws you in to the whole experience. The first play is equally satisfying; silky smooth animation, plenty of impressive moves and a great selection of very different characters. Everything here has been polished until it shines.

What did we think of the game after 20 minutes or so? Needless to say there are games which might seem like a waste of time for the first hour or so but which reward perseverance. By the same token there are those that seem great when you test them for ten minutes in your local software emporium but can disappoint once you've played them at home for a longer time. This is our way of warning you about games where your first impressions may not be reliable enough to base your purchasing decision on.

OTHER FORMATS?

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Namco have not released a game on the PC to date. We would love to think that *Tekken 3* could be the game to buck the trend, but it's extremely unlikely.

N64 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Although a few of Namco's minor titles have made it to the N64, Sony's deal means that there is as much chance as no chance of *Tekken* appearing on the N64.

The review you are reading may not be for a game currently confirmed for release on your machine. However, Total CONTROL is a genuine multi-format magazine. This means that at every opportunity we will be keeping you fully informed of any developments affecting you and the machines that you own. The Other Formats boxout is a prime example of this; a probability rating of 1-5 indicates what we consider to be the likelihood of the featured game ever appearing on your machine, while the accompanying text explains our reasoning or that of the company concerned.

VERDICT

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Tekken 3
GRAPHICS	95
SOUND	92
PLAYABILITY	95
OVERALL	94
Out of 100	

With scores given in three categories before arriving at a final score you can see exactly where the game's strengths and weaknesses lie. Don't necessarily expect the overall score to be a mathematical average of the other three though, the playability rating will generally carry a lot more weight than the other two. And how important the scores for sound and graphics are will vary according to the style of the game reviewed. It's also important to note that we at Total CONTROL have different ideas about percentages than many of our competition; see the diagram and explanations on the left for a breakdown of exactly how scores are awarded in Total CONTROL. Ignore the verdict box at your peril!

VIVA Football

Ah, the **beautiful game**... So simple, yet so brilliantly deep and **passionate**... Ooh, it's got me all **excited**. Anyway, **long live football!**



Above: Corners and free kicks are performed using a power bar similar to that seen golf games



TAKING CONTROL

The first ten minutes of any football game is always taken up by figuring out the controls, but the impressive selection of classic teams to choose from was a welcome sight...



INFORMATION

FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Virgin Interactive
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Football Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	Yes
DUAL SHOCK	No
MEMORY CARD	One Block



Football is the most popular sport on the planet, but is it the most popular genre of video game? Well, judging by the amount of footie games released over the years, someone somewhere must like it. Yeah, of course you like it – what else could explain FIFA's seasonal climb to the top of the charts? However, this does beg the question, why do other companies bother to release football games when every Christmas EA come along and win all the honours?

So, with all that competition out there, how does Virgin's *VIVA Football* hope to offer the punter that which he hasn't seen before? Well, the main selling point of *VIVA* is that it features an unusual number of international teams – teams from almost every nation on Earth... and not just present teams; each country has the relevant team for every World Cup year. Major footballing

nations go back as far as 1952, while teams such as Bahrain only go back as far as 1994. But then, who want to play as that all-star Bahrainian team of 1842?

A little bit of history repeated

This is the best aspect of *VIVA* – the ability to choose some of the all-time great teams and reenact some of the all-time classic games. You can banish all those World Cup blues with a quick England vs. Argentina, 1986 (Warning: watch out for that short, stocky number 10). Or how about beating West Germany in the 1974 World Cup Final with Cruyff's 'total football' Holland? *VIVA Football* has all the correct player names, plus a decent-sized squad for you to edit the classic teams. There are also plenty of venues to choose from, making the illusion seem all that more real.

Okay, this feature is an excellent idea, but it's all going to be for toffee if the actual game isn't up to much. *VIVA Football*'s approach to control retains some elements of an arcade-style football game but implicates one of the more instinctive control methods seen in the genre. Controls are kept to the bare essentials – pass, shoot, long ball and chip. These all work on a power bar, and the length of time you push on the button dictates the type of ball your player will play. Usually a long hold on the button will give a higher ball, as in the case of chip button. The



THE BEAUTIFUL GAMES

If you're a football fan then the chances are that you've already got one of the better PlayStation sims. In our opinion, there are three games better than *VIVA* available: *FIFA '99*, *ISS '98* and *Michael Owen's WLS '99*.



Michael Owen's WLS offers the player more intricate controls



feature is most obvious in the pass button, where a tap will set up a one-two and a long hold will play a through ball.

This doesn't mean that *VIVA Football* lacks the depth of moves that its rivals seem to have in abundance. You can perform all kinds of moves – one-tuos, volleys, headers and so forth from just double tapping the appropriate button. There is also an interesting method used in dead ball situations where the power bar is used in a manner similar to a golf game, and stopping it either side of a line will curl the ball in the respective direction. The whole control system is intelligently thought out, except for this: control of which player to use is completely down to you, and you have to select which player to use. What should happen when you

VIVA FOOTBALL IS COMMENDABLE ATTEMPT AT A FOOTBALL GAME BUT LACKS THAT SPECIAL SOMETHING TO SET APART FROM THE REST

press the player select button is that the computer selects the player closest the ball, in the best position. What actually happens is that you have to cycle through each of your players on the field until you get to the one you want. Not very good if you are facing a counter attack and need to pull off a quick tackle.

In native tongues

In a radical departure from all football games, *VIVA Football* shuns commentary from a top commentator (are there any left?) and replaces it with on field banter. The cries of players can be heard over a surprisingly dull crowd noise, and it works surprisingly well.

While the stadiums and animations are fine, if nothing special, graphically *VIVA Football* is little bit old-fashioned. The player models lack the 'soft skin' of *FIFA*, and as a result look like they are made from cardboard. The result is that *VIVA Football* looks a little rough around the edges and doesn't compare favourably with either *ISS '98* or *FIFA '99*. However, the designers should be complimented for including some models that actually look like their real life counterparts – Pelé looks like Pelé, and Bobby Charlton looks like Bobby Charlton. Good stuff.

VIVA Football is a commendable attempt at a football game but lacks that special something to set apart from the rest. The inclusion of the classic teams is more than welcome, and a lot of work has gone into compiling the database. The bonus games are welcome, as is the 'history' mode which allows you to play any World Cup from 1958 to the present, including all the qualifying matches. Overall, *VIVA* is not a bad effort, it just lacks that magical spark. **Nick**

Team	Team
GK 1 Felix	GK 1 U. Pico
FB 2 Carlos Alberto	FB 2 J. Olguin
CB 6 Wilson Piazza	CB 6 L. Galvan
CB 5 Everaldo	CB 5 D. Passarella
FB 3 Brito	FB 3 A. Tarantini
WM 7 Jairzinho	WM 7 D. Berton
MF 4 Chidoaldo	MF 4 O. Ardiles
Brazil	Argentina

OTHER FORMATS?

PC

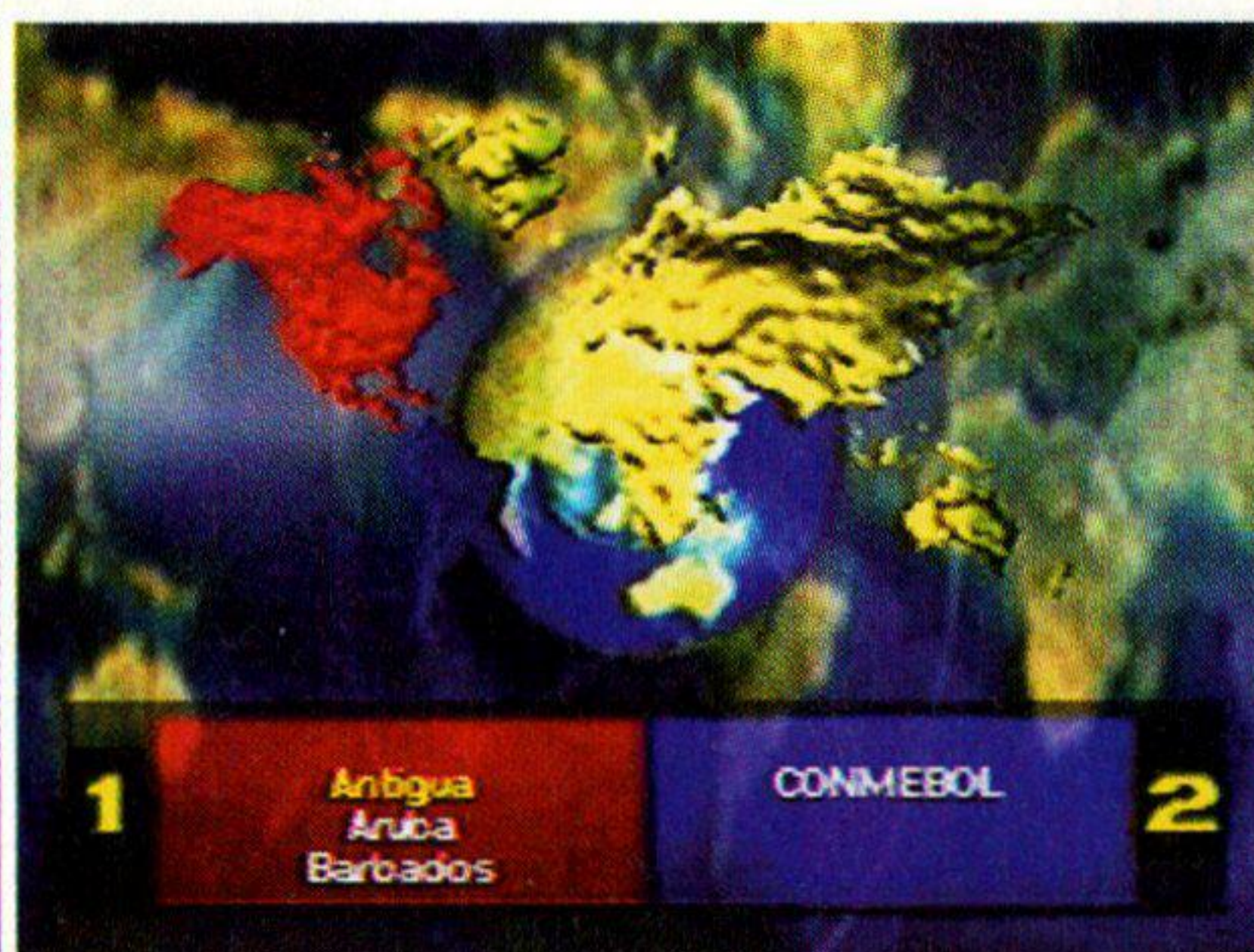
VIVA Soccer, the PC version, should be out by the time you read this. Pretty much the same, only with accelerated graphics.

N64

The N64 already has two superb football games, so it would be hard to see *VIVA* getting a look in.

Dreamcast

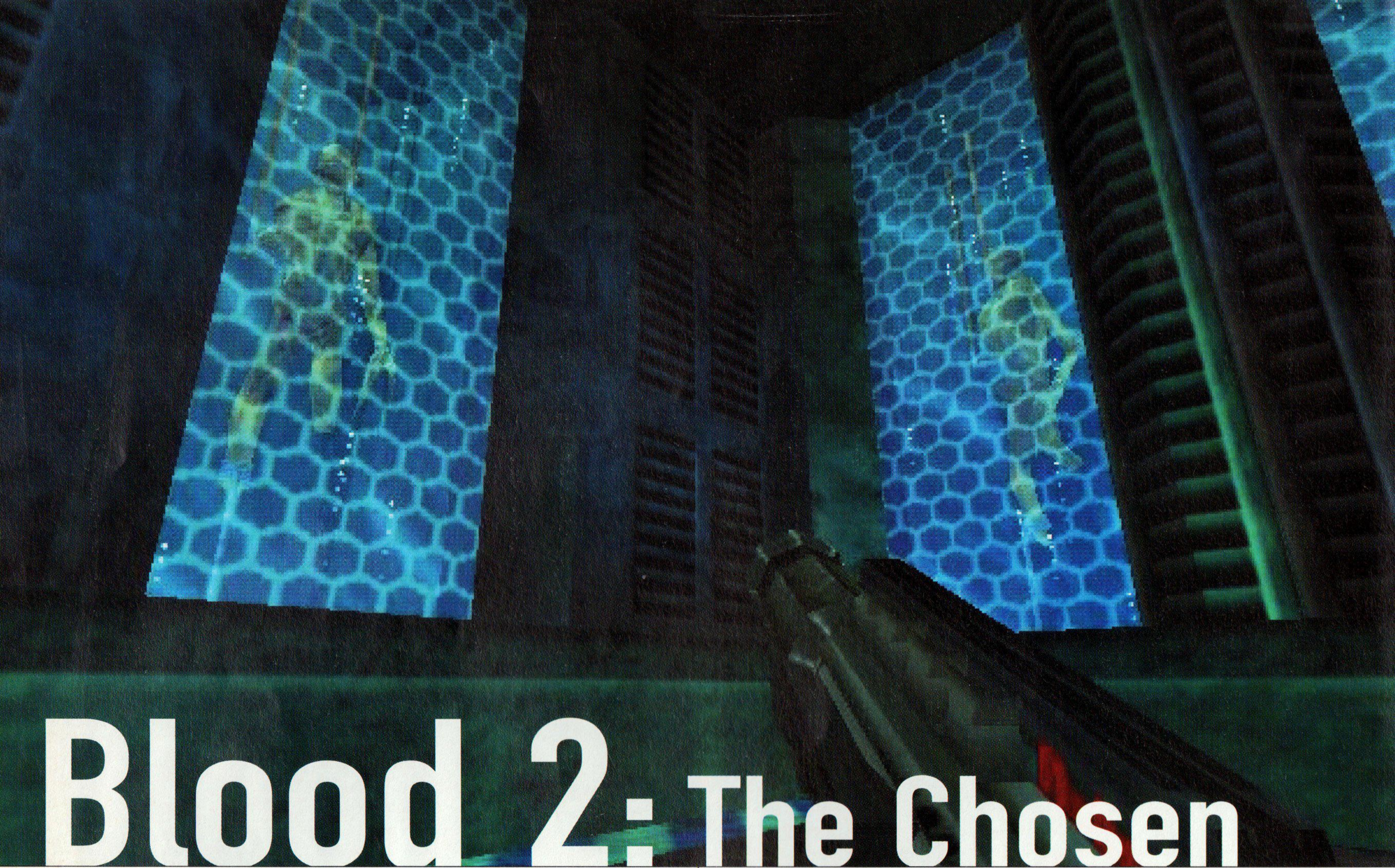
There's a good chance we may see a version of *VIVA Football* on the Dreamcast in the near future.



VIVA Football has a wealth of options, not least of which is the ability to play as teams from every part of the footballing world

VERDICT

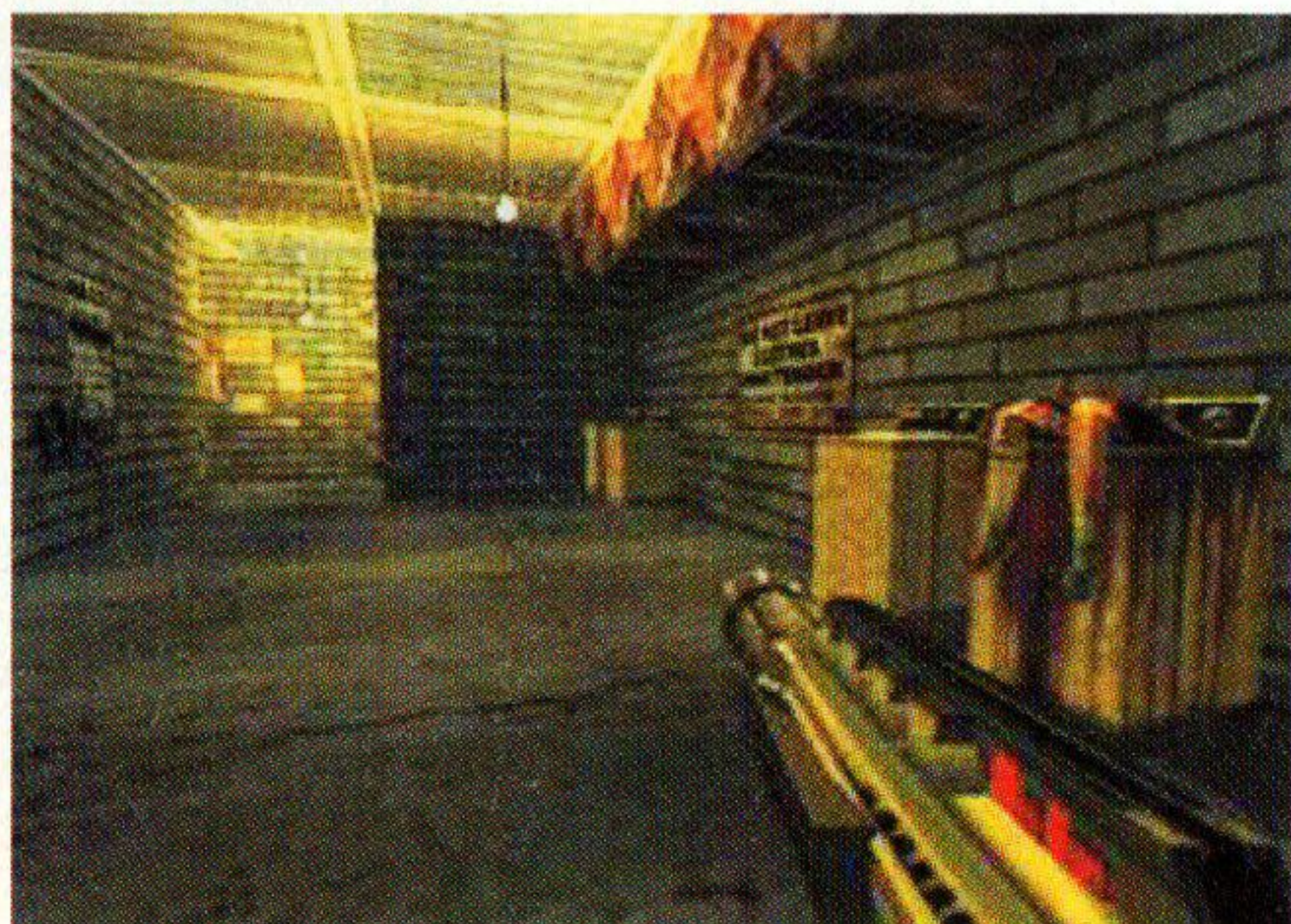
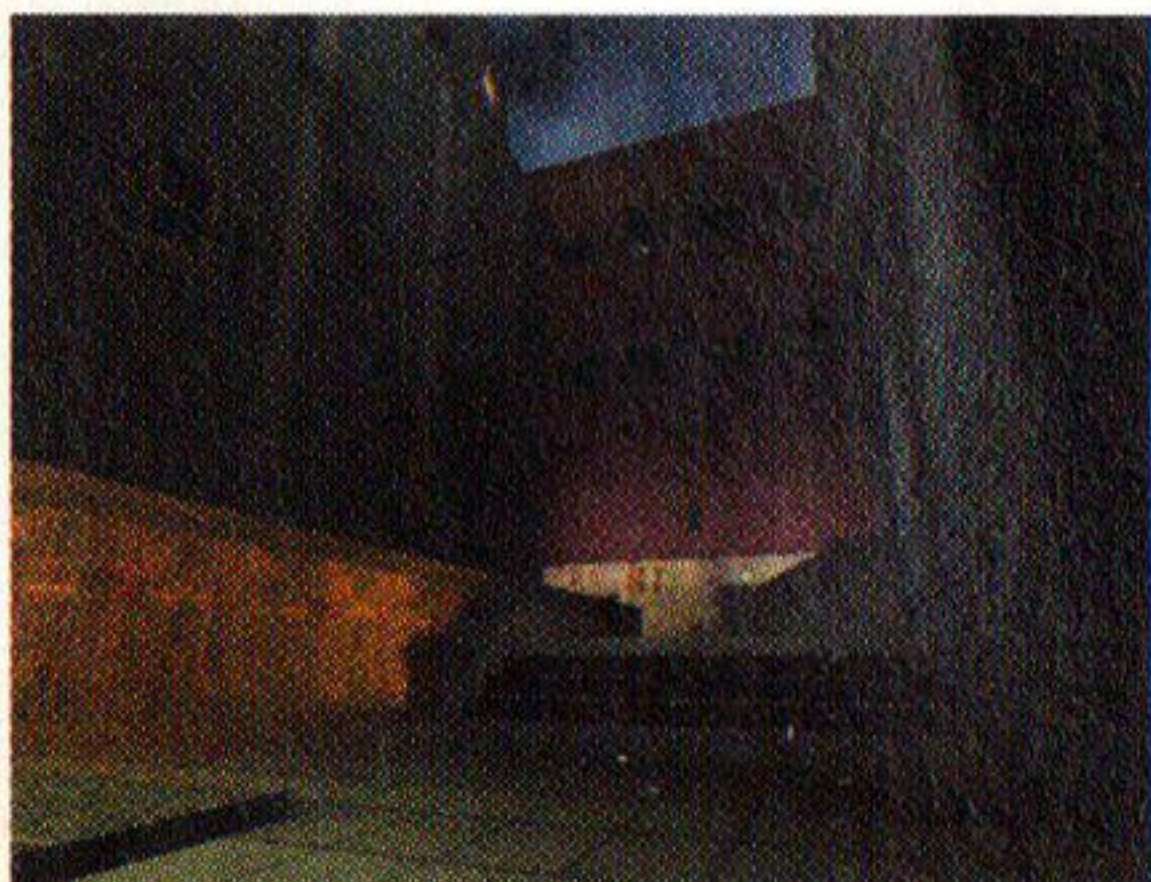
GAME NAME	VIVA Football
GRAPHICS	67
SOUND	69
PLAYABILITY	76
OVERALL	73
Out of 100	



Blood 2: The Chosen

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	GT Interactive
DEVELOPER	Monolith Productions
STYLE	First-Person Shooter
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£34.99
PLAYERS	1-8
PROCESSOR	P166 P233
MEMORY	32MB
DISK SPACE	175MB 450MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional



Oh joy... another **first-person shooter** to review. But can **Blood 2: The Chosen** offer us **hardened games players** anything **new**?

With a flood of quality first-person shoot-'em-ups on the market at the moment, it seems that we might as well welcome another one into the foray. What difference would one more make? *Blood 2: The Chosen* is the follow-up to the moderately successful *Blood* (surprisingly), and sees the return of that game's central character, Caleb.

The plot of *Blood 2* revolves around the game's central character, Caleb, an undead anti-hero, who occasionally goes off on a random killing spree to satisfy his homicidal tendencies. He is the 'living' conduit of all the souls he has killed, and as such he is a target for the evil (more evil than Caleb) Cabal cult who are intent on restoring Tchernoborg, their Dark God. So this is where you come in, in a traditional battle between evil and err... evil.

Evil empire

Although the game boasts an 18 certificate, there is little here that would offend in the way that, say an 18 certificate film would. True, bodies explode, causing entrails to scatter all over the place, and there are a few expletives muttered here and

there by the lead character, but it's nothing that you wouldn't hear in your local playground. Anyway, the blood and guts are so over the top (a couple of blasts from a beretta is enough to make a person explode) that any death is seen as kind of humorous. The game does manage, however, to produce a sadistic feeling in the player, with innocent bystanders pleading for their lives just before you blow them into a million pieces. This black humour is a continued theme throughout the game, and the main character's wise cracks, although inspired by Duke Nukem, are enough to raise a chuckle here and there.

This game has some imaginative maps – non-linear with plenty of secrets off the beaten track – and there is also plenty of variety; levels take place in such locations such as airships, tube stations and cathedrals. This gives the game a unique feel to it – there is perhaps nothing else on the market quite like *Blood 2*. The trouble is that there are games already available that are better, namely *SiN* and *Half-Life*. The latter of these two is a lesson on how to make a new first-person shoot-'em-up.

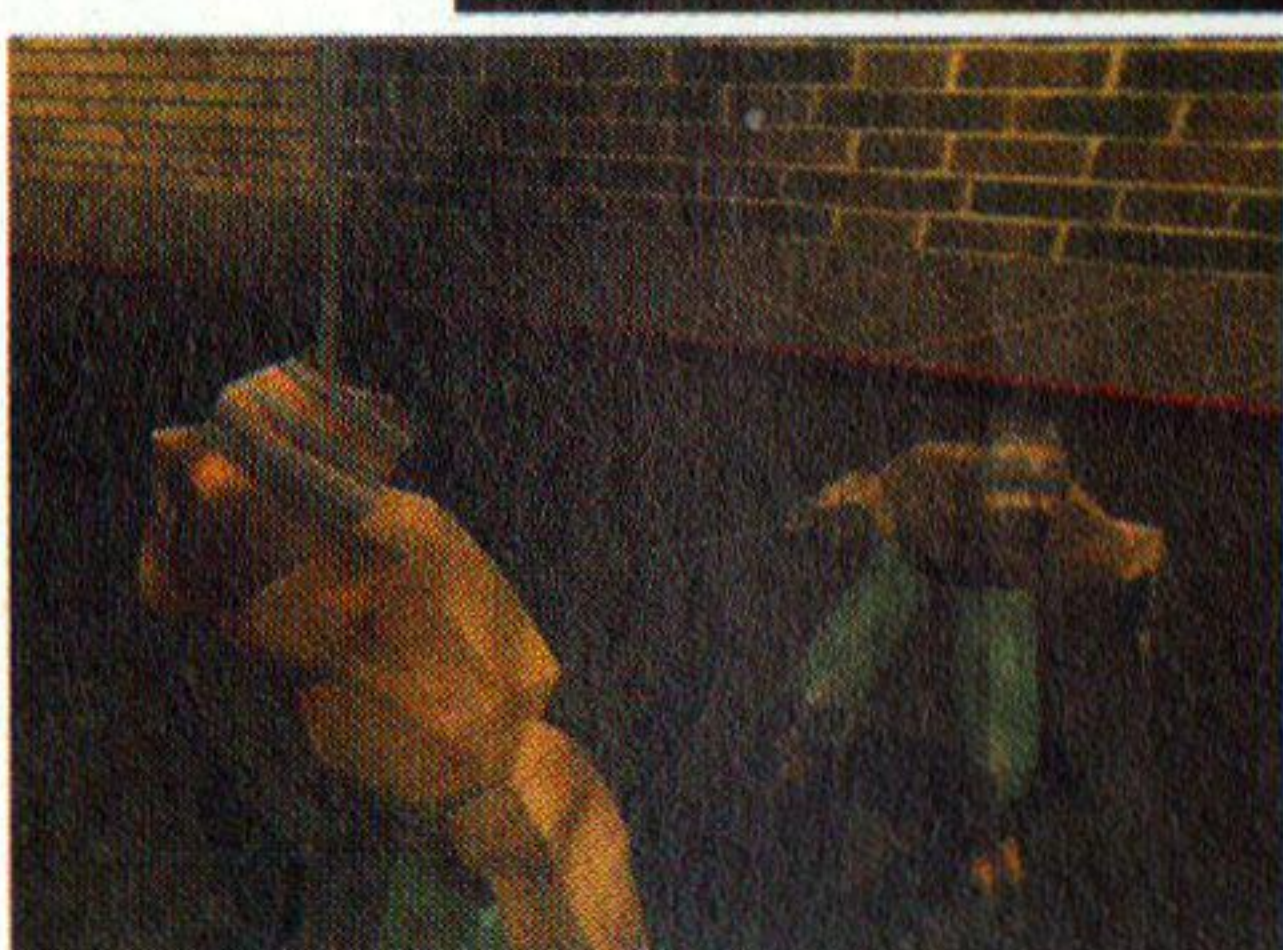
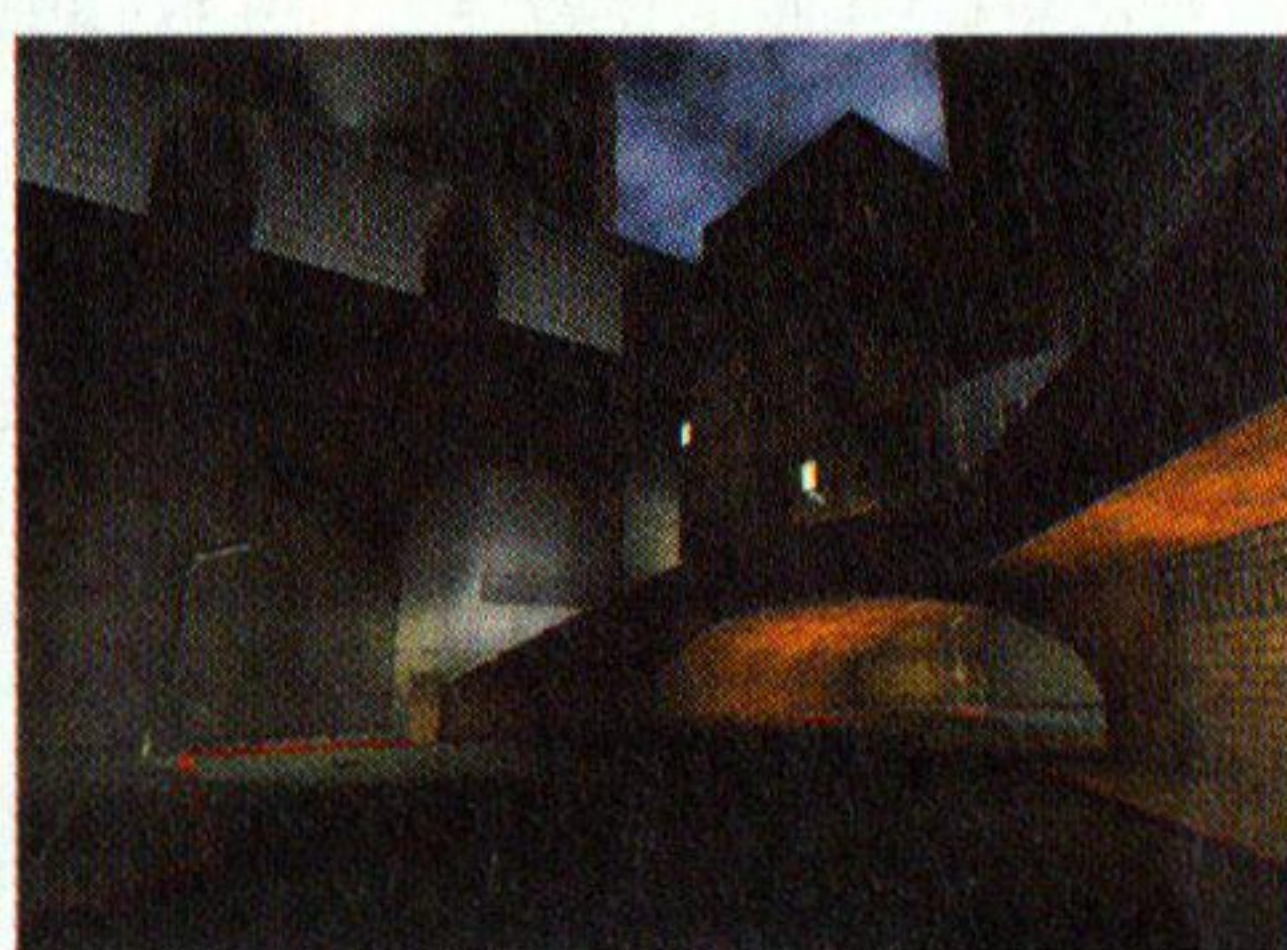
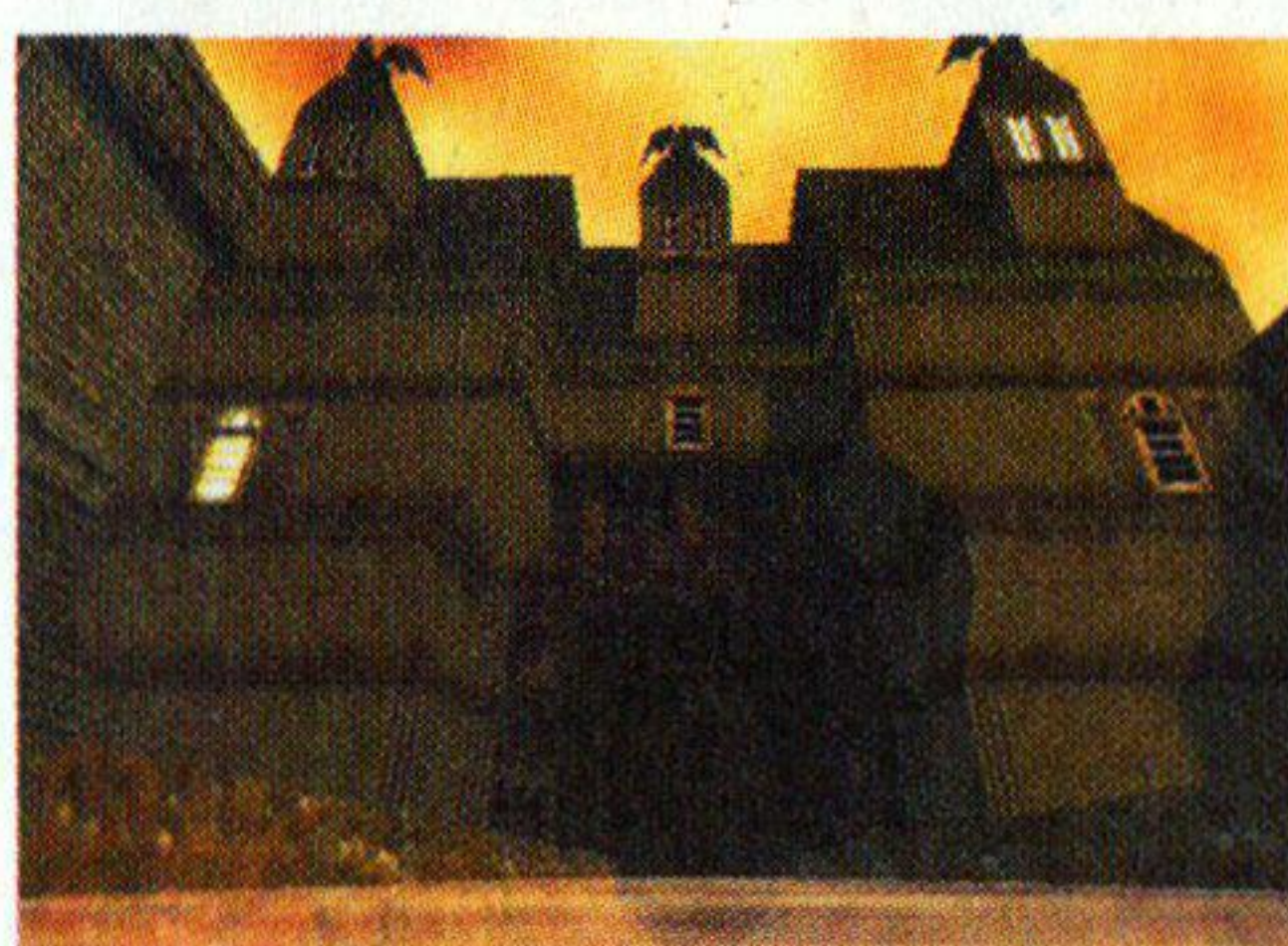
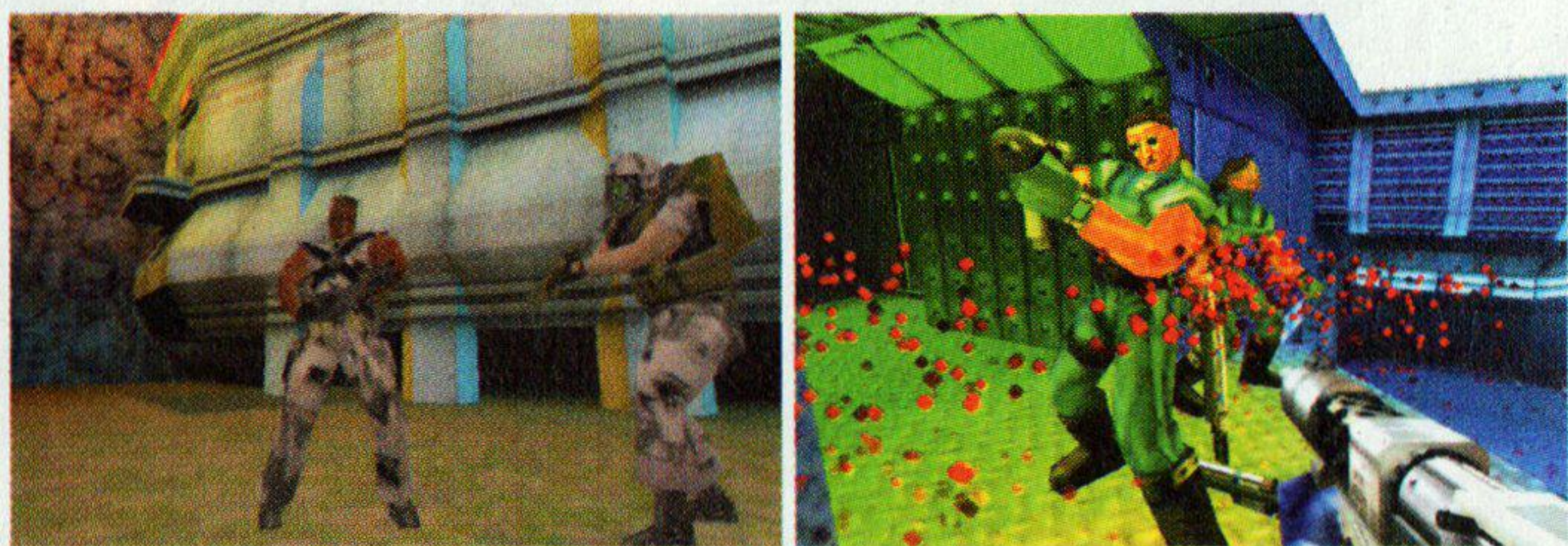
Interaction with NPCs, puzzle solving and action-based outcomes

TAKING CONTROL

An eighteen certificate on the box hints that this game might be even more adult than the recently released *Half-Life*. Hopes of an intensely dark experience are dashed soon afterwards as you realise that this is little more than a comic book adventure.

THERE IS ANOTHER...

While *Blood 2* provides a worthy distraction from other games in this genre, it doesn't really offer anything new. There is better available to buy, namely *Half-Life*, *SiN* and *Rainbow Six*. It's difficult to compare *Rainbow Six* to this kind of game – it offers a more strategic slant on the genre. However, *Half-Life* is streets ahead of *Blood 2*, and even the very similar *SiN* is a more satisfying option.



– *Blood 2* has none of these elements as part of its make up, and as such suffers in comparison. The game is perhaps closer to *SiN* than *Half-Life*, both in the fact that it uses the (now tiring) *Quake II* engine, and in its comic book approach to plot and scenario. You do get the sense of one environment in its entirety as the game forces you to revisit some of the previous locations, with new areas opening up to you. It's a variation on an old idea (we've seen this in *Hexen*), but it does make for an interesting slant on the purely linear level-based gameplay we might have had.

As a slight twist to the plot you are able to play the game from the point of view of other characters in the game. Sounds like a good idea, but the reality is that this offers only a small amount of variety. There are three other characters: Ophelia,

One of the best features are the varied locations, including apartment blocks, sewers and cathedrals

The voodoo that you do

Blood 2 does feature some extremely inventive weapons, not least a gun that can make black holes and a voodoo doll which harms you if you use it with no one around – inventive and well-suited to the game's undead atmosphere. Graphically, the game isn't much better than *SiN* and is a long way short of the majesty of *Half-Life*. Having said that, though, *Blood 2* uses the *Quake II* engine to good effect, and enough work has gone into the design of textures to make that game look its age.

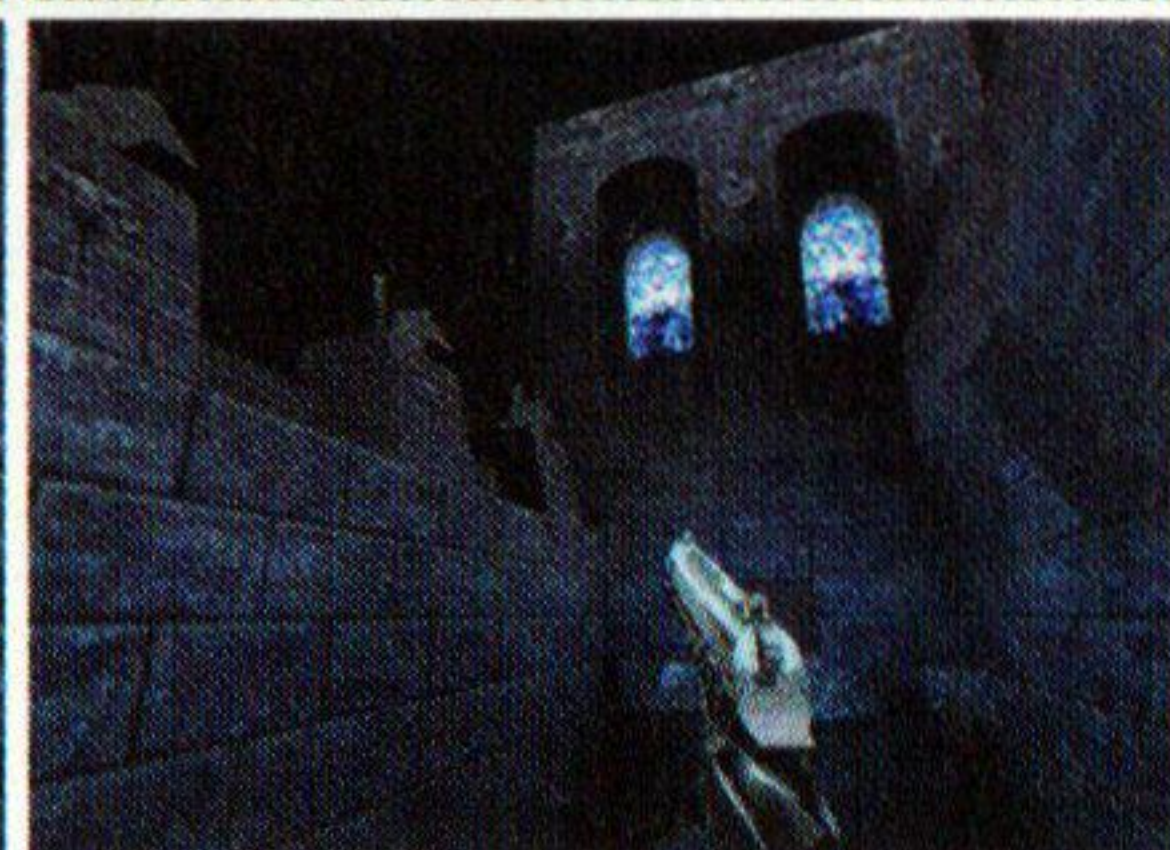
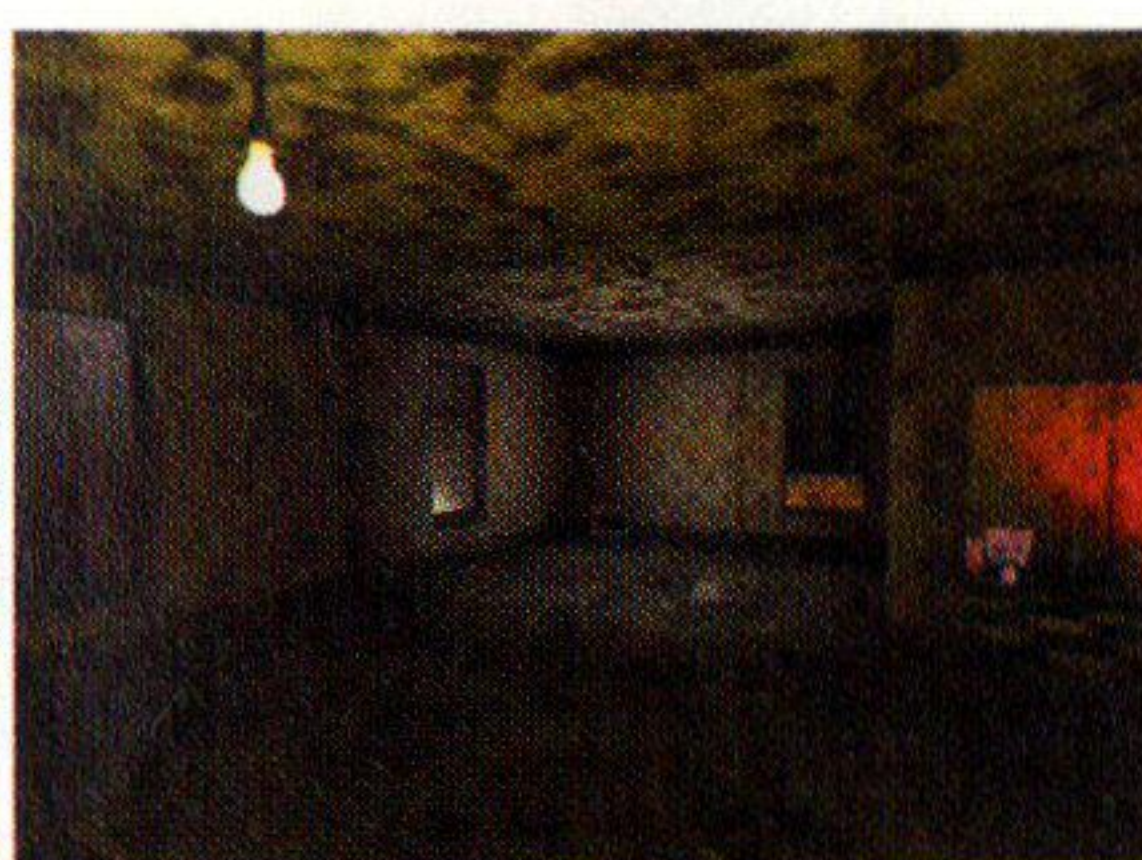
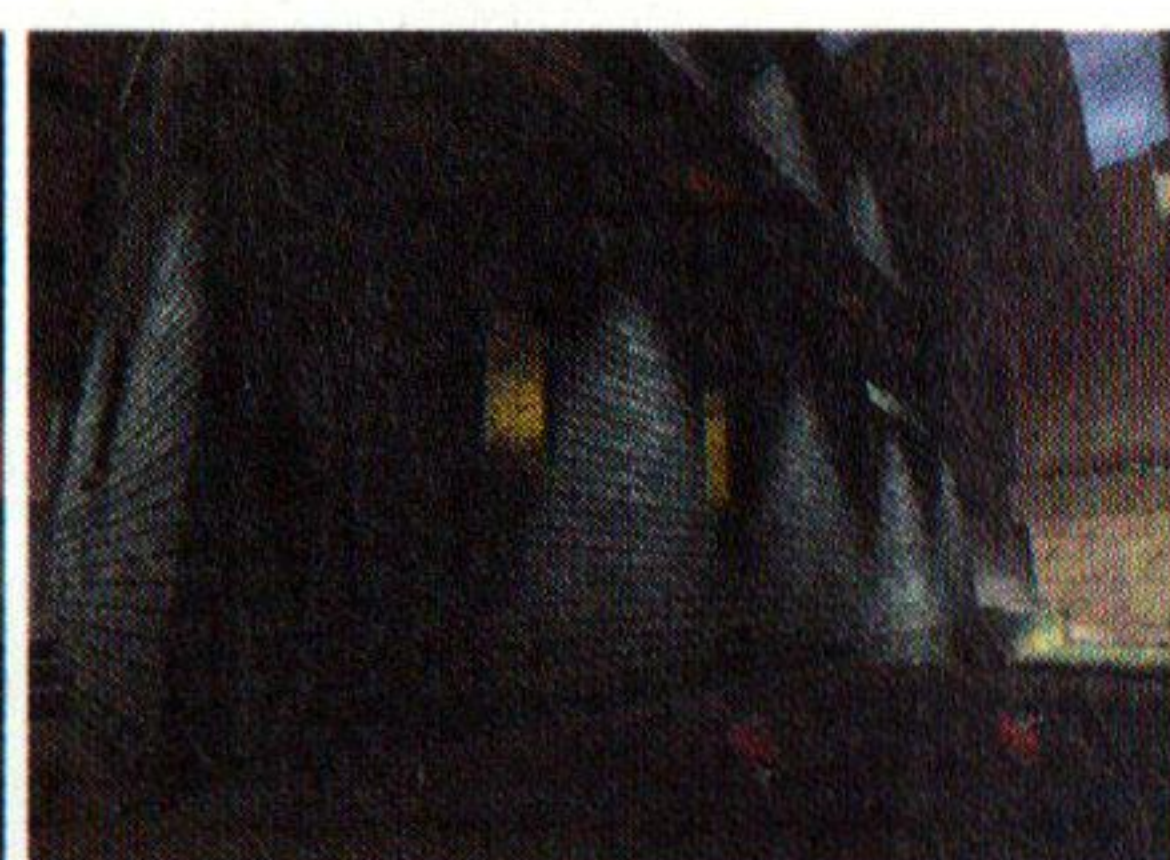
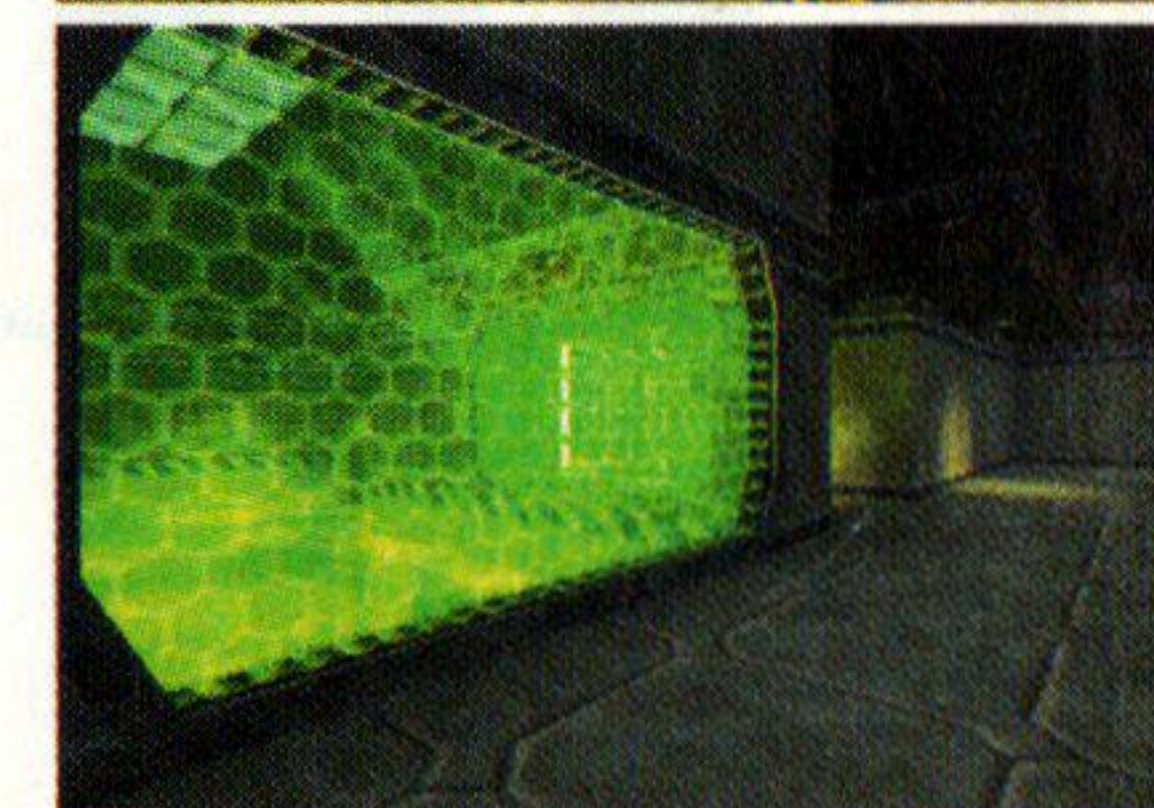
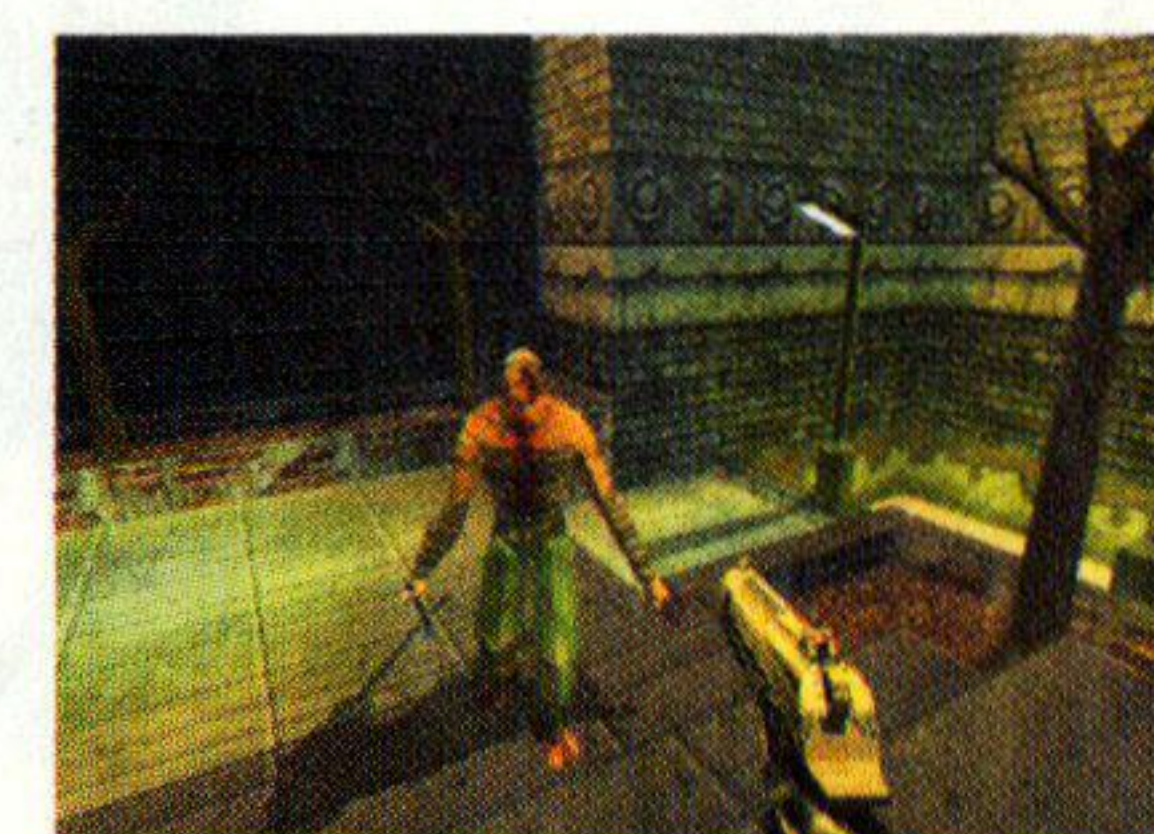
So there you have it. In a nutshell, *Blood 2* is similar to *SiN* and *Half-Life* in many respects, only

BLOOD 2 IS SIMILAR TO SiN AND HALF-LIFE IN MANY RESPECTS, ONLY IT LACKS SOME OF THE COMPONENTS OF THOSE TWO GAMES THAT PROVE VITAL IN SETTING THEM ASIDE FROM THE DROSS

Ishmael and Gabriella. The only difference is that you get a few different samples and some different weapons. Okay, not brilliant, but it adds a little to the game's longevity.

The main difference, however, between this game and its closest cousin is that whereas your enemies in *SiN* have the intelligence to hide or run away if they are taking a beating, your adversaries in *Blood 2* do little more than queue up to be shot at. This may have been acceptable in the days of *Doom*, but now? We don't think so.

it lacks some of the components of those two games that prove vital in setting them aside from the dross, such as artificial intelligence and action-based outcomes. *Blood 2* still has a lot going for it – interesting settings and a unique feel to it, whilst both the story and the atmosphere are enjoyably sadistic in a sort of comic book way. These redeeming features should see the game find a niche market in what, to be honest, has become an over-saturated genre. **Nick**



Surprisingly for a game of this genre, *Blood 2* has a very limited variety of enemies and nothing on the scale of *Half-Life*

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ●●●○○○

With *Quake II* making the jump to PlayStation, it is quite possible that *Blood 2* will make it to the machine – it all depends on the game's success.

N64 ○○○○○○

Half-Life and *Quake II* have already been announced for the N64, but we still think it highly unlikely that *Blood 2* will follow. The gore is likely to put Nintendo off.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Blood 2
GRAPHICS	71
SOUND	72
PLAYABILITY	80
OVERALL	79
Out of 100	



NIGHTMARE CREATURES

TAKING CONTROL

It's quite an exciting, yet eerie, looking title, but you soon come back to the cold, hard reality of it being a shambolic playing experience. It hardly captivates you and certainly doesn't encourage you to play it for any lengthy period. It is a disaster in the making.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Activision
DEVELOPER	Kalisto
STYLE	Arcade Adventure
RELEASE	February
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	One
RUMBLE PAK	Yes
MEMORY PAK	Yes
EXPANSION PAK	Yes

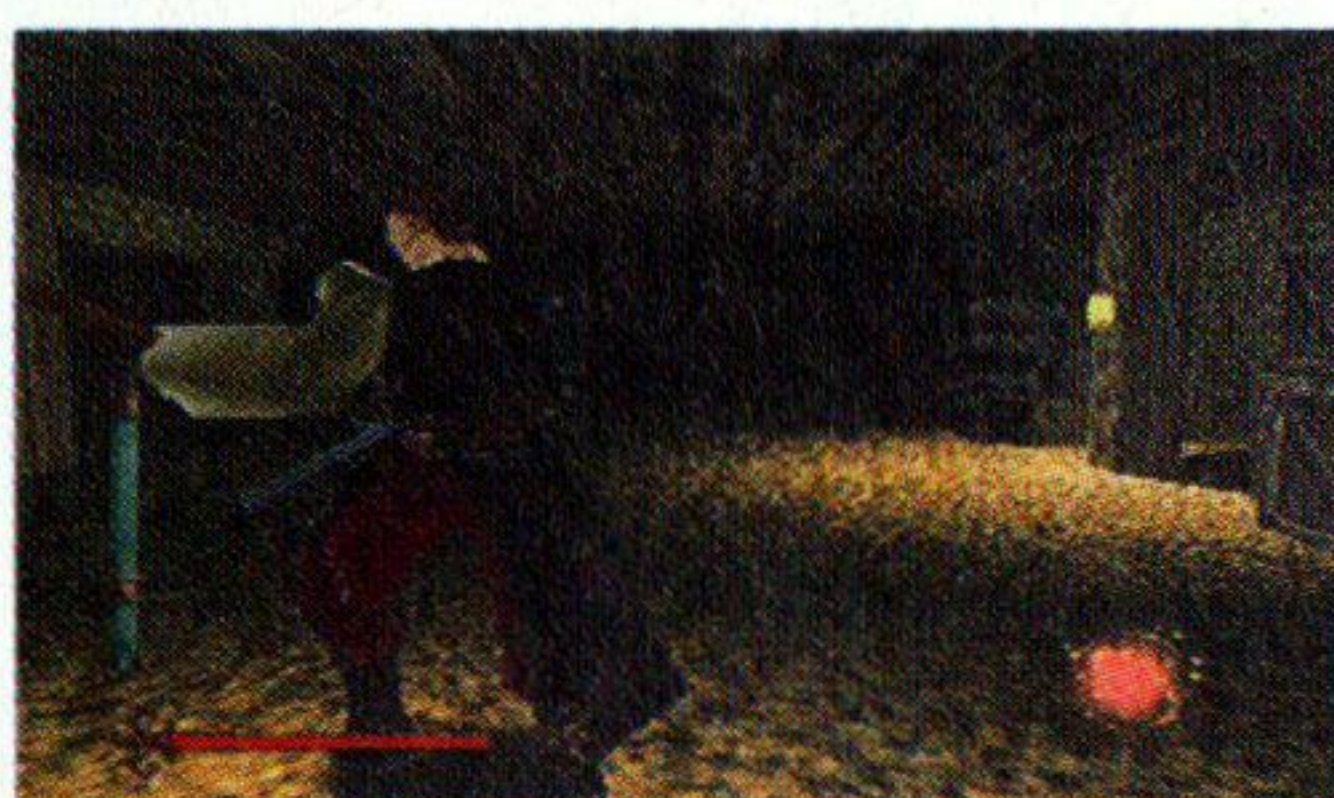
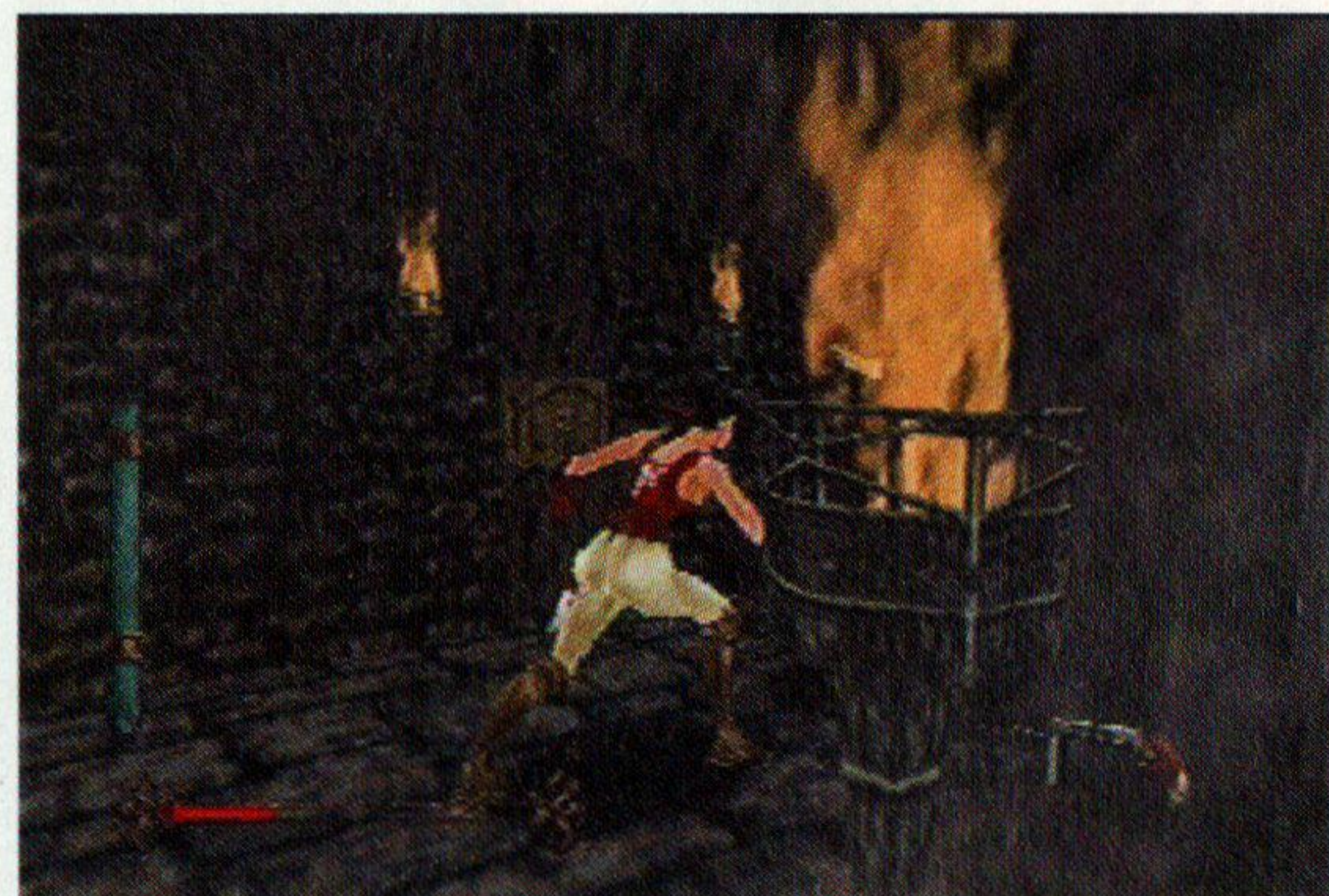
We played this **nightmarish software** on the PlayStation many moons ago, and now it has the opportunity to **shine on the N64**. Will we be wetting our beds with pleasure or **waking up screaming** in agony... again?

If you thought your N64 was just a medium for showing cute, furry animals running around in a bubblegum world or simply a 'nice' console drenched in political correctness that allows us to play with nice things, then Activision have opted to toy with expectancy and discard convention. The fantasy Technicolor environments have become the murky, urine-ridden streets of olde London, the soft and lovable heroes now sport hardened faces and blood-spilling weapons, and assailants are now decorated with rotting flesh and multiple heads – and there isn't a pink mushroom-shaped softie in sight. *Nightmare Creatures* appears to be an arcade adventure noticeably out of place on the N64. If you can picture Sherlock Holmes in fancy Victorian attire being chased by a Tasmanian Devil lookalike, then you'll have a fair idea of what this is all about.

You take the reigns of one of two characters – Ignatius, the staff-wielding male, or Nadia, the sword-flinging female. These are the two unfortunate souls who have been entrusted with restoring normality to this once-charming city. Looking like cast members of a Brontë period drama, the unlikely couple are responsible for scouring the streets in search of the 'Brotherhood', the villainous cult of the era. Whilst on the trail of this evil ring, the gallant duo have to dispose of all manner of charmless creations – and within a time limit as well. Who said fighting crime was easier in those days – Columbo, perhaps?! Only a helpful wealth of armaments lying carelessly about the place and some much-needed health bonuses are available to aid you on your journey and, boy, are they needed!

OUT ON A LIMB

Such is the poor quality of the visuals that some moves your character performs will result in some major polygon break-up. Legs and arms will mysteriously disappear.



Ignatius takes time out to sight-see the murky underbelly of London's – surprisingly dry – underground sewer system... Nice!

Bit of an animal

Once you get stuck in you will immediately realise this is not the most visually pleasing game you're ever going to play. Just over 18 months ago the PlayStation version of *Nightmare Creatures* was released, and it looked identical. Much to the dissatisfaction of N64 owners, it is with sorrowful remorse that we have to report that the Nintendo version has failed to muster any improvement in this department whatsoever. The moody environment is a less than impressive 3D postcard and the characters, however detailed they were intended to be, look so sharp and jagged that they'd feel more at home in Delia Smith's kitchen than in a video game. As we approach the millennium at such a rapid rate, the only explanation that can be offered is that developers have received blatantly wrong information from the researchers of the PSX version and forsaken the Nintendo's obvious capabilities in favour of public

ONLY A HELPFUL WEALTH OF ARMAMENTS LYING CARELESSLY ABOUT THE PLACE AND SOME MUCH-NEEDED HEALTH BONUSES ARE AVAILABLE TO AID YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY

demand for 'rough-looking' graphics. A cock-up in the PR department? Who knows. It just drags down a game that could have been so much better.

Astonishingly, though, this isn't the worst factor of the game. Accompanying the idle approach to the graphics is a dreadfully awkward control method – and that's the nicest thing anybody will say about it! With the success the *Tomb Raider* games have enjoyed with the 'up moves you forward and left and right rotate you' system, it isn't surprising to find the Activision team following suit. Sadly, *Nightmare Creatures* encapsulates everything that could go wrong when tampering with conventional playing practice and the alternating camera.

It isn't so bad to have a game with fairly average-looking graphics as long as the playability is something to scream from the roof tops about. However, bad graphics and bad playability are two ingredients that do not blend to form a tasty cake – a deflated sponge is a far more appropriate term. Camera angles are found working on their own, incoherent with the direction or actions your character is undertaking. One minute you'll find yourself stabbing away at an opponent, and the next he'll be

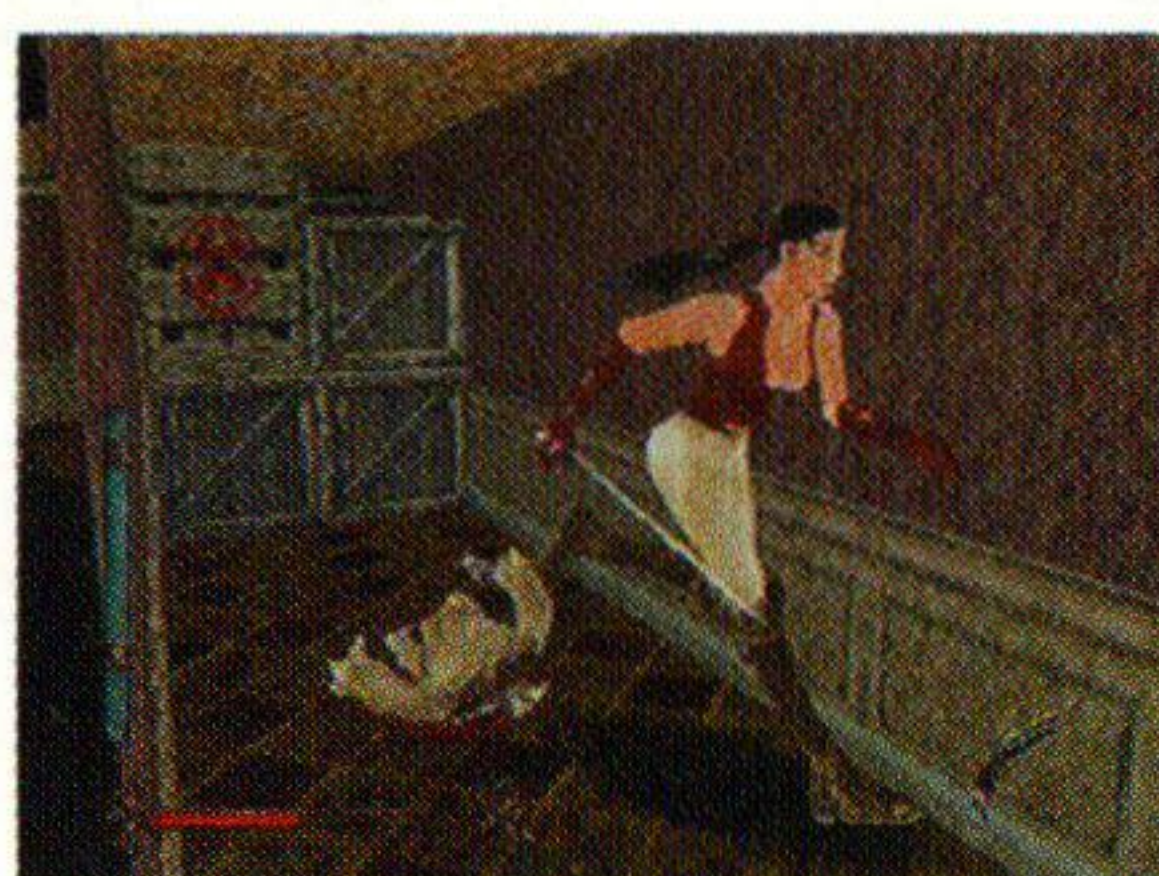
behind you and the camera will be flapping around like a turkey in Bernard Matthews' kitchen. It is rather more frustrating than it is annoying, and will certainly fail to keep your attention for any sustained period of time.

Filthy creatures

The only thing that isn't wholly a disappointment is the sound – but there isn't much in the way of that anyway. There is an atmospheric background drone and a few entertaining snarls, grunts and groans from the monsters, but that's about it. Again, nothing to climb upon the rafters and bellow about.

Don't misunderstand, it seems as though this game has offended my family and the Shaolin Temple and there aren't enough offensive words to relieve my grievance with it, but that isn't the case. This is by no means the worst game you'll ever play, it's just that by today's standards developers should have avoided making the fundamental errors they've made with *Nightmare*

Creatures. They could have learned from the quibbles people aired about the PSX version and produced an updated N64 conversion instead of churning out the same software with the same problems. Compared with the PlayStation, N64 owners have a very limited supply of games, and to be content with shoddy pieces that have been transported from the Sony machine is insulting to the N64 fraternity. If you are looking for a frightening gaming experience on the N64, try switching it on and sitting on it in wet pyjamas (no, no – only kidding!) because the only shock you'll get is how bad *Nightmare Creatures* actually is. This is, literally, a nightmare. **Lee**



To create a solemn and very moody feel, each of the levels are played in dark, enclosed areas or in the dark of night

OTHER FORMATS?

PC

This is probably the best *Nightmare Creatures* of them all, but only because the graphics are slightly better. The same dodgy controls, again, give it no chance.

PlayStation

Not so long ago, *Nightmare Creatures* made its console debut on the Sony machine, sharing problems identical to those found in the N64 version. It seems as though Activision have failed to react to these hindrances and we have yet another poor attempt at a game.

Dreamcast

It would be possible to release a much enhanced version of *Nightmare Creatures* on the Dreamcast, but judging by this effort we doubt that anyone will bother.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Nightmare Creatures
GRAPHICS	49
SOUND	54
PLAYABILITY	48
OVERALL	49
Out of 100	



Heretic II

The first game to adapt the **original *Doom*** engine has at last managed to **spawn a sequel**. Things are looking **optimistic** for the **second *Heretic*** game.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Activision
DEVELOPER	Raven Software
STYLE	3D Adventure
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-8
PROCESSOR	P166 P200
MEMORY	32MB
DISK SPACE	375MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

Heretic II has taken the original idea from *Heretic* and improved upon it immensely. Now with full 3D accelerated graphics and third-person game engine, it's turned out to be better than many would have expected.

Your character, Corvus was cursed to wander the outer worlds after destroying D'sparil at the end of the original *Heretic* game. After finding your way back to your homeland, you arrive to find the streets deserted and the few remaining people infected with a deadly plague that has turned them into enraged killers. You begin the game here, wandering through your town, fighting off the attacks from the

ex-members of your race. Your search for a cure leads you through swamps, ancient deserted cities, dungeons and castles – typical environments that you'd expect from a gothic adventure like this.

Encounters of the third kind

As you can see, the game has undergone a third-person transformation, but the game engine is actually a modification of the well-worn *Quake II* engine, though this looks notably better than any of the other enhanced versions you may have seen, including recent titles such as *Half Life*. The new

TAKING CONTROL

After the disappointment of the potentially incredible *Tomb Raider III*, *Heretic II* was a nice reminder that not all 3D adventures rely on computer generated tits to help them sell. It's a great-looking and hugely playable game that after only a few minutes has managed to convince me that the next few days should be worth looking forward to.

YOU GOT THE MOVES?

With third-person games generally having more key combinations than first-person games – and with the novel inclusion of defence spells – *Heretic II* has quite a large key list. To avoid taking your eyes off the screen when you want to select a new weapon in the heat of a battle, a wheel mouse comes highly recommended as it allows you to access five commands with your mouse hand instead of only two.



perspective allows your character to achieve some much more varied moves, including spins, rolls and pole vaulting – if you are being chased by an enemy you can even run and jump up at a wall and then kick back to leap over your opponent. Third-person views also allow the player to get a greater sense of their surroundings; with the sometimes very complicated nature of the levels, the game couldn't have been done from a first-person viewpoint. Hardened fans of first-person views may be disappointed, but unlike a lot of other games of this type, *Heretic II* is played in a very similar way to other first-person games such as *Quake II* or *Half-Life* – the controls are almost identical, with free look options for the mouse and similar settings for the keyboard.

WITH THE SOMETIMES VERY COMPLICATED NATURE OF THE LEVELS, THE GAME COULDN'T HAVE BEEN DONE FROM A FIRST-PERSON VIEWPOINT

The only major difference to the controls is the novel inclusion of defensive and aggressive weaponry. Offensive weaponry can be a mixture of physical weapons such as bows or staves that require their own specific ammo or psychic weaponry – i.e. spells, all of which require a varying amount of offensive mana that can (luckily) be found lying around on the floor. As well as this there are also a number of defensive spells that can be cast which require a certain amount of defensive mana. Offensive and defensive spells differ only by the fact that you have more control when using the offensive magic. The defensive is either triggered by an enemy's attack or will last for a set period of time.



Roundabout

The game is split into a number of worlds, which are, again, split into their own levels, but the player can move from one to the other at any point. To begin with this is not necessary, but later on you must complete tasks all around the worlds, so retracing your steps to other levels is very important. The problem is that this can become very disorientating; you do usually have a level map, but there is no mark to represent where you are, so getting lost is not uncommon. Eventually you will learn the level, and as soon as this happens your frustration quickly diminishes. Each of the levels is impressively big, but entering a new one requires an excessive wait. All of the loading times in the game are obtrusive – you'll just need to make sure you don't die too much.

Heretic II is the game *Tomb Raider III* should have been. If you're still wondering whether to buy Lara's latest adventure, I'd put it a distant second to *Heretic II* on my list. The only major fault in the game was that the easiest game mode (adventure) was completed in only two days, but then the other two modes (action and armageddon) promise a much higher completion time. As a 3D action/adventure, *Heretic II* is about as smoothly polished as you could want. With several other similar games around at the moment, *Heretic II* stands proudly over the rest of the competition. **Will**

Although the maps take a while to learn, the levels are well-designed, and after a few minutes exploration you'll quickly learn the way around

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ●○○○○

With a *Quake II* engine already on the PlayStation, Activision could convert it in the same way as the PC, though it would be an impressive technical feat.

N64 ●○○○○

With Activision releasing *Quake II* on the N64 over the next year, there's a chance that they could convert *Heretic* using the same engine. The market would certainly be there.

Dreamcast ●●○○○

A conversion would certainly be plausible at a later date, though there have been no rumours to suggest it so far.



Completing *Heretic II* on its hardest difficulty setting will require good use of both your defensive and offensive spells

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Heretic II
GRAPHICS	92
SOUND	91
PLAYABILITY	88
OVERALL	88
Out of 100	



Jeff Wayne's War of the Worlds

No one would have believed, in the **last years of the twentieth century**, that **Rage Software** would make a **strategy game** based on one of the **best selling albums** of all time.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	GT Interactive
DEVELOPER	Rage Software
STYLE	Strategy
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£35.99
PLAYERS	One
PROCESSOR	P133 P200
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	120MB 120MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Not Supported

This game is one of those things which could easily have been so horribly different. When someone takes it upon themselves to adapt a classic of any genre, the result is always risky. People tend to expect the worst, and are often slow to accept a new version of something with which they have become familiar.

H. G. Wells' classic hundred-year-old masterpiece The War of the Worlds is an icon to science fiction fans everywhere,

MUSICIANS PERFORMING ON THE ALBUM INCLUDED PHIL LYNOTT, DAVID ESSEX, JULIE COVINGTON AND JUSTIN HAYWARD. THE STORY WAS CHANGED SLIGHTLY FROM THE ORIGINAL

and has suffered its fair share of adaptations over the last century. Perhaps the most famous was the Orson Wells radio broadcast which caused panic and controversy in 1938. Movies such as the 1953 Hollywood version which moved the story to America did the original no favours, and the TV series based on the book was barely recognisable.

World of music

One of the strangest adaptations of the story was Jeff Wayne's musical version, released as a double album in 1978. It featured the talents of a remarkable cast, including a superbly atmospheric narration by the late Richard Burton. Musicians performing on the album included Phil Lynott, David Essex, Julie Covington and Justin Hayward. The story was changed slightly from the

original and shortened somewhat, but what emerged was a work of high quality. At the time of its release, the track 'Forever Autumn' reached number one, and the album stayed in the charts for over six years and has clocked up sales of over six million copies. It is now available on CD, and is still popular today.

TAKING CONTROL

The first impression is provided by the voice of Richard Burton speaking the chilling introductory passage of Wells' classic book. The FMV intro sequences are not the best, but are good nonetheless. The actual game starts slowly, with lots of manoeuvring and building of vehicles and resources, but after about fifteen minutes the strategy begins to devolve into tactics, and you start to really get involved.

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS (1866-1946)

H G Wells, along with Jules Verne, is generally credited as being the founding father of the literary genre which is known today as science fiction.

Born in Bromley, Kent, Wells did not publish his first novel, *The Time Machine*, until 1895, when he was aged 31. A year later he followed it with *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. More works followed, including *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) and *The War in the Air* (1908).

After this he moved outside the genre of science fiction which he had helped to create, and published what he considered to be more serious literary works. He was also an outspoken critic of the Victorian social order, and published many political pamphlets. Wells died in London at the age of 80.



Invading Martians stalk across the English landscape in their deadly tripod walking machines, and all that stands in their way is the British Army and, of course, you

Mix it up

It is this musical version of Wells' novel which has now been adapted as a computer game by Rage Software, and it has to be said that they have done a very good job of it. Since the game is based on an album, it would be fair to assume that the soundtrack is going to be a fairly major part of the production, and this is indeed the case. Jeff Wayne has collaborated on the project and is credited as Executive Producer. The Richard Burton narration has thankfully been retained, as has a lot of the musical content of the album. The background music heard during play is adapted and remixed from the original, and provides a superb atmosphere for the game. If you are a fan of the album, you won't be disappointed by the soundtrack of the game.

Ring the changes

The story has been slightly altered yet again, with the main thrust of the Martian invasion starting in the highlands of Scotland rather than around London. The Victorian imperialist assumption that any invading force would have to defeat Britain in order to conquer the world is maintained, and the Martians aim to take over the country piece by piece.

This is really two games in one, because you can play a full campaign as either the Humans or the Martians. If you choose to play the home team, the first you hear of the impending attack is an animated version of the opening chapter of the novel, with a Cylinder landing on Horsell Common. Further landings bring more invaders in the northern part of the kingdom, and you must rally your troops to repel the Martians. At the start of the game, the invaders have a massive advantage. Their heat ray makes mincemeat of the relatively puny armoured vehicles of the Victorian era, just as it did in the book.

Learning curve

The solution comes in the form of intensive research into new military technology, such as heat resistant armour, track-laying vehicles (tanks), and aircraft. The strategy element of the research program is well balanced with the tactical deployment of troops – you have to get both sides right to win the campaign.

Whichever side you play, the game takes place on two map levels. The War Room map for the Humans and the Elder Chambers map of the Martians shows England and Scotland divided up into regions, while the battle maps for both sides show detail views of each of the regions, and this is where the fighting takes place. The Martian objective is to destroy the Houses of Parliament in London (good idea!), while the Humans aim to destroy the Martians' base in the Scottish Highlands.

Speed it up

Although the game starts slowly and simply, the pace and complexity soon build up. This is not a *Command and Conquer* clone, and you don't win just by building more tanks than the enemy. *War of the Worlds* is a thinker's strategy game with a lot more going for it than might at first seem to be the case.

The graphics are not flashy or pretentious, but are nicely detailed and quite adequate for a game of this type. There is no support for 3D accelerator cards, but then there is no need for it. The game will run on a P120 with 16MB, although it is very slow. The recommended spec of a P200 with 32MB will support the game perfectly well with all the graphics options on. There is a slight pause when the CD tracks change, but nothing worth worrying about.

All in all, this is a simple but classy game with a superb soundtrack and a remarkable pedigree. **Cliff**

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ●●●○○

The graphics engine of this game is simple enough to adapt to the PlayStation, so this has to be a possibility at least.

N64 ○○○○○

Very unlikely. There are no real-time strategy games on the Nintendo, and this game is not likely to be the first off the starting blocks.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

War of the Worlds lacks the sophisticated accelerated graphics of a potential Dreamcast title, so a conversion is pretty unlikely at this time.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	War of the Worlds
GRAPHICS	75
SOUND	95
PLAYABILITY	80
OVERALL	85
Out of 100	



Metal Gear Solid

TAKING CONTROL

From the word go you are aware that this game is going to be quite an experience. The brilliant cinematic opening, with credits on screen, only hints at what is to come. Very quickly, you know that you have an epic on your hands.



A group of **terrorists** have hijacked a **nuclear warhead** and are threatening to launch it on **Washington DC**. There's only one thing that stands in their way – a man known simply as '**Solid Snake**'. This is no game – the **stakes are just too high...**

Konami's *Metal Gear Solid* has been one of the most anticipated titles to appear on the PlayStation. The promise of stealth-based gameplay and an intriguing storyline has lead many games players to become extremely excited at the prospect of this title. A look at the Japanese version in issue one of Total CONTROL confirmed some of our hopes, but seeing as none of us understood a word

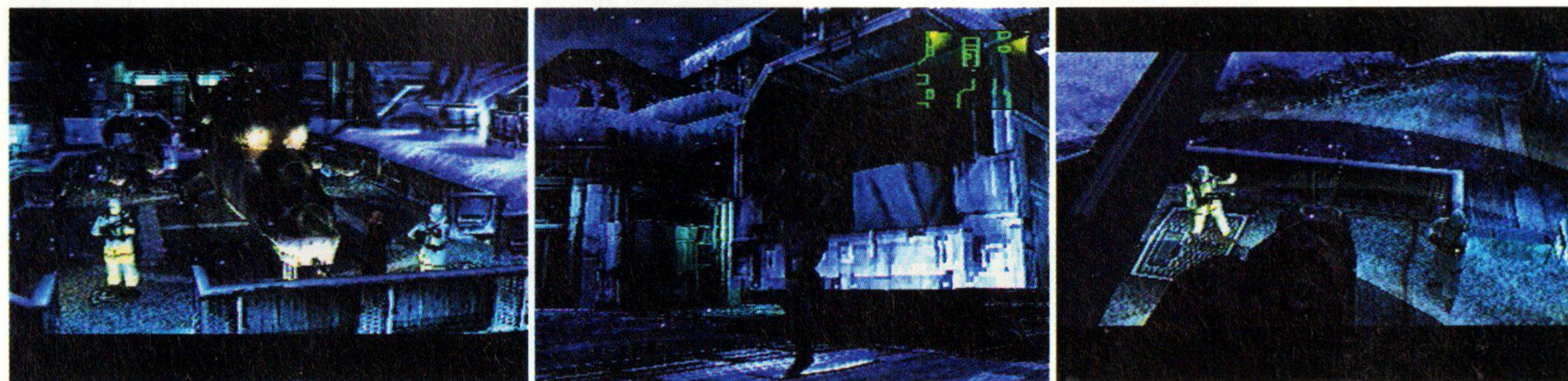
of Japanese, the task of working out what the hell was going on seemed an impossible one.

Interactive cinema

Metal Gear Solid features some of the best graphics design ever seen in a PlayStation game. Textures are highly detailed, lighting is superb and many of the environments are some of

INFORMATION

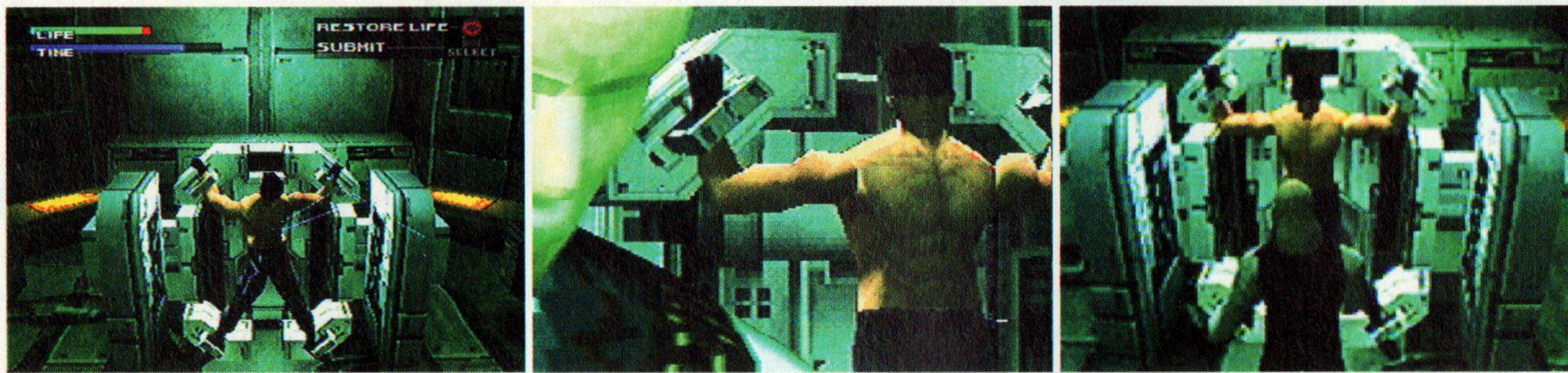
FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Konami
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Action Adventure
RELEASE	March
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	One
ANALOGUE	Yes
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block



Locations are impressively detailed and are often on a large scale. There are always plenty of places to hide, like the back of a van (centre)

WHAT'S THIS DOING IN A VIDEO GAME!!!?

Metal Gear Solid breaks all kinds of boundaries, and this is part of its attraction. This is the first game to feature video footage from the Hiroshima bombing, and it is the only game I've seen where your character is tortured. This really give the game a mature feel to it. Let's hope that this trend continues.



the most impressive yet seen. There are moments that are of almost photographic quality; vehicles in particular are spectacularly realised – the tanks and helicopters are close to perfection. Also, clever use of effects manages to lend a cinematic feel to the game. Cut scenes, all handled in real-time, are seemingly directed movie-style, with a great deal of thought clearly going into the composition of the shot, its lighting and depth of field.

Metal Gear Solid is essentially an interactive movie; it places the plot on a par with the gameplay. This revolves around a group of terrorists and their attempt to hold the world to nuclear ransom. However, this is not all there is to it, and the character development and twists and turns that the story takes as you uncover a web of deceit and corruption are of the

the market and is actually pulled off very well. Despite the enemy guards' lack of vision (they can only see about ten metres in front of them), they will notice footprints in the snow, sounds and even your breath in the cold. Alert one guard and it might as well be game over, so you are forced to use thought and strategy if you are to simply make it across rooms. There are puzzle aspects here, but no more than working out where to go next and how to get there, and you can usually get help from your Codec communication device. Essentially the gameplay consists of the stealth parts, working out what to do or where to go next and boss sections. Sounds quite basic when you put it like that, but *Metal Gear Solid* pulls it off with so much aplomb that the game never becomes tiresome to play and you always have to know what's going to happen next.

THIS GAME IS SO ACCOMPLISHED, IT'S HARD TO PICK FAULT WITH IT. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT METAL GEAR SOLID WILL GO ON TO BE ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL GAMES OF ALL TIME

kind that many Hollywood blockbusters are crying out for. And all this from a video game.

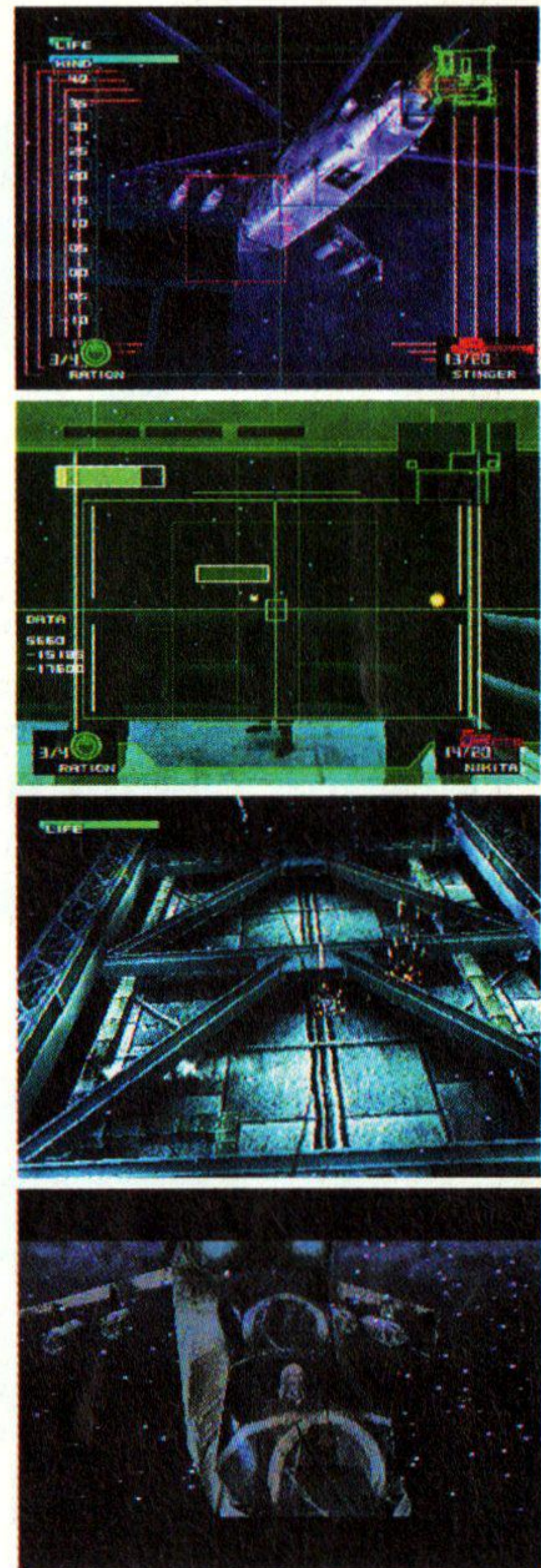
Of course, one of the advantages of using CD technology is that it enables developers to use actor's voices. Translation is usually poor in Japanese games, and even in titles such as *Resident Evil*, the voice acting is so hammy it distracts from the seriousness of the game. Not so with *Metal Gear Solid*. The game has been translated superbly and the acting is of the highest standard seen in a video game, but it helps when the dialogue is as believable and well-written as it is here. This aspect of the game is vital in giving *MGS* its incredible atmosphere. Actually being able to hear what each of the characters sounds like increases your feelings of empathy towards them and helps convey emotion – something which text-based adventures like *Final Fantasy VII* lack.

Sneaky, sneaky

Cinematic aspects aside, *Metal Gear Solid*'s gameplay takes inspiration from several sources and then adds a few new ideas of its own. The stealth part of the game makes a welcome – and challenging – change from all the gung ho first-person games on

The boss sections really are excellent and have a great deal of variety. For example, a fight against Vulcan Raven in a tank sees you lobbing grenades into an open hatch while trying to avoid machine gun fire, tank shells and getting run over. One other fight pits you against a psychic, Psycho Mantis, who can levitate and read your mind. With this ability you find it quite hard to hit him – that is, until you realise that plugging the controller into the second port will prevent him from reading your mind. There are better, more imaginative fights, but then I don't want to ruin the surprise for you...

Metal Gear Solid is undoubtedly one of the finest games to appear in the nineties – its mix of action, adventure and cinematic atmosphere is superbly balanced. Although the game does not last that long (it takes about fifteen hours to complete), for that period of time you ARE Solid Snake, a lone fighter against international terrorism and corruption – the game really is that immersive. This game is so accomplished it's hard to pick fault with it; presentation is top notch, the game looks and plays beautifully, and there is a well-defined and balanced learning curve. There is no doubt that this will go on to be one of the most influential games of all-time. **Nick**



Although the cut scenes are rendered by the PlayStation, they often border on the photographic

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

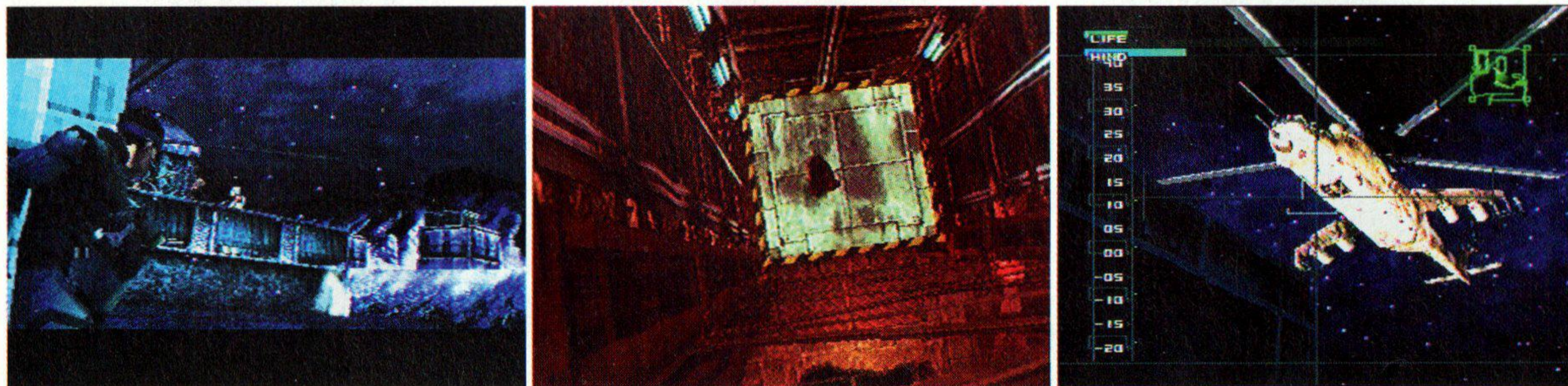
It's hard to see how *Metal Gear Solid* would appear on the PC. Konami have never released anything on this format and the PC market in Japan is small.

N64 ● ● ○ ○ ○

Rumours abound that the N64 will see a version of *Metal Gear Solid* sometime in the near future. Don't hold your breath though.

Dreamcast ● ● ● ○ ○

Like the N64, pretty much the same goes for the Dreamcast. However, it's more likely that *Metal Gear Solid* will appear on Sega's machine.



Camera angles in *Metal Gear Solid* are cinematic (left and centre). Many weapons use a first-person perspective, like the Stinger Missile

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Metal Gear Solid
GRAPHICS	95
SOUND	90
PLAYABILITY	94
OVERALL	95
Out of 100	

Top Gear Overdrive

Arcade racing games haven't always met with the best response on the **N64 over the past few years**. Could **Top Gear Overdrive** mark a change in the trend?



TAKING CONTROL

Despite running in high-res with beautiful scenery and full speech music tracks, *Top Gear Overdrive* came bundled with a disappointingly frustrating first 20 minutes gameplay. The analogue stick felt far too sensitive, and the back of the car was sliding all over the place. Luckily, it did get better...

INFORMATION

FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Kemco
DEVELOPER	Snow Blind
STYLE	Racing Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-4
RUMBLE PAK	No
MEMORY PAK	Yes
EXPANSION PAK	Yes

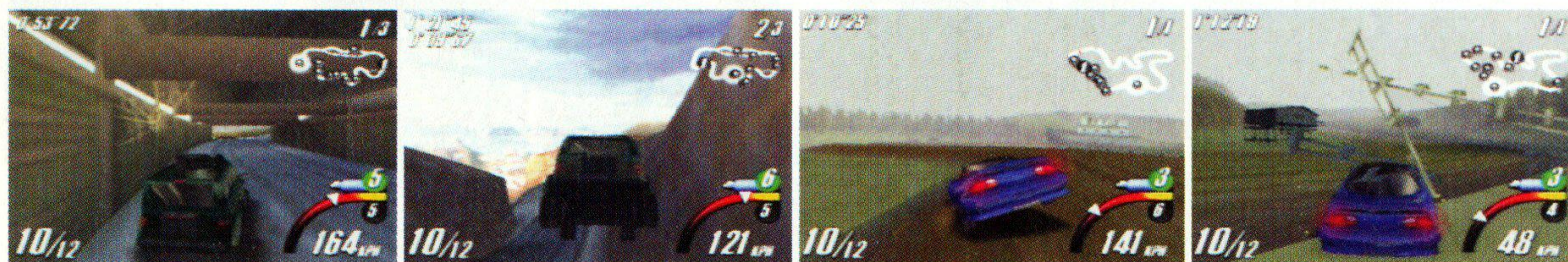
Top Gear Rally was one of the better early N64 racing games, though there was little to boast about regarding the quantity or quality of the games in the genre at the time of its release. Things are beginning to change now, with N64 racers matching similar games on the PlayStation. *Top Gear Overdrive* not only improves upon its predecessor but ranks as one of the better N64 racers around at the moment, with games such as *WipeOut 64* and *F-Zero X* also in that category. Kemco have done themselves proud.

Back on track

One of the more noticeable differences is that the game has become far more arcade orientated than its simulation-based predecessor – huge jumps and nitro and cash pick-ups on the

floor indicate that the game is aiming at a slightly different market. Concrete roads that lead you through mountain and swamp and city landscapes have mostly replaced the off-road tracks from the original. Look on your map and you'll see that there are multiple routes through many of the levels, and some also have hidden shortcuts that can be found by crashing through barriers which lead you through abandoned mine shafts etc.

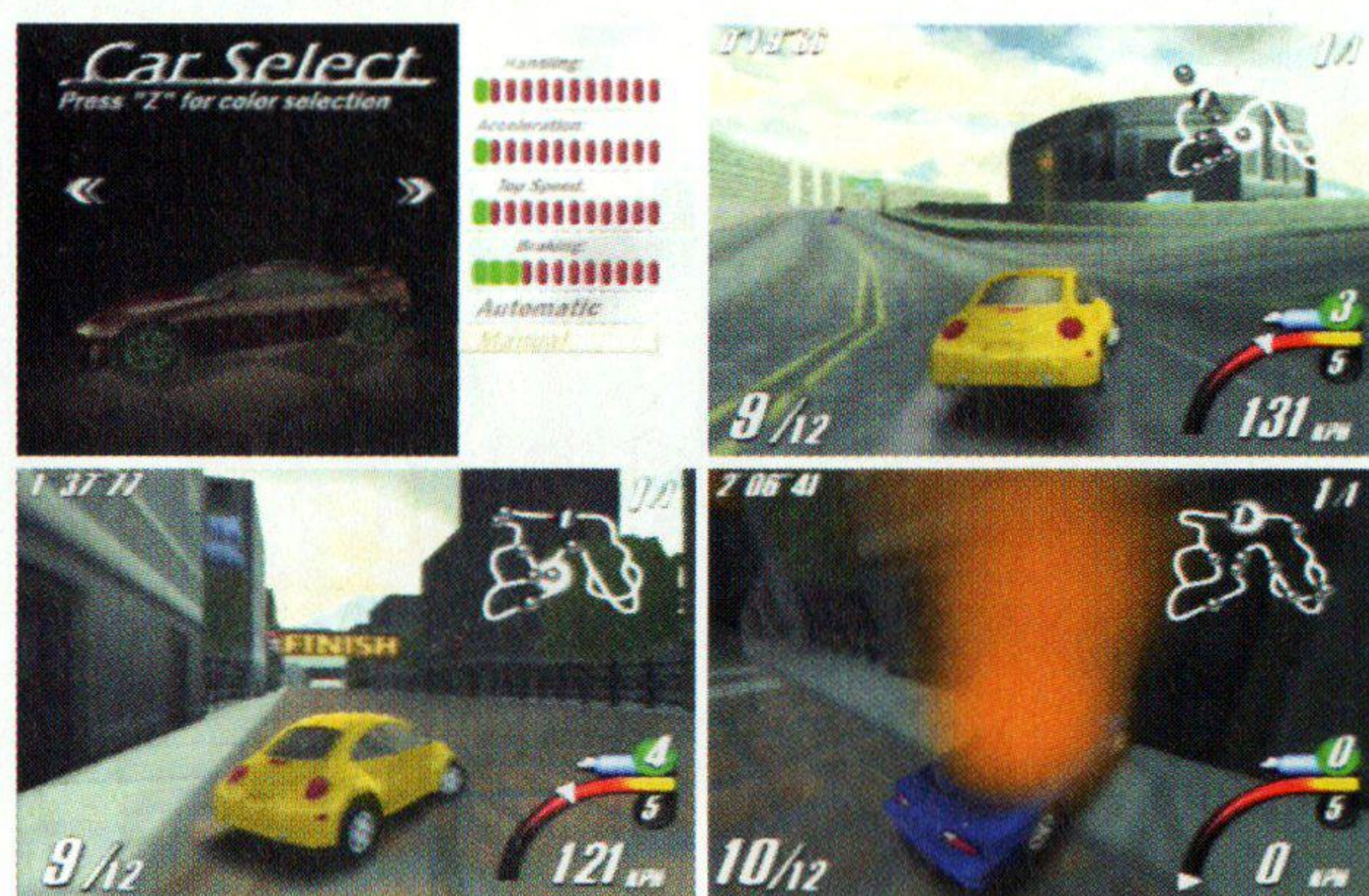
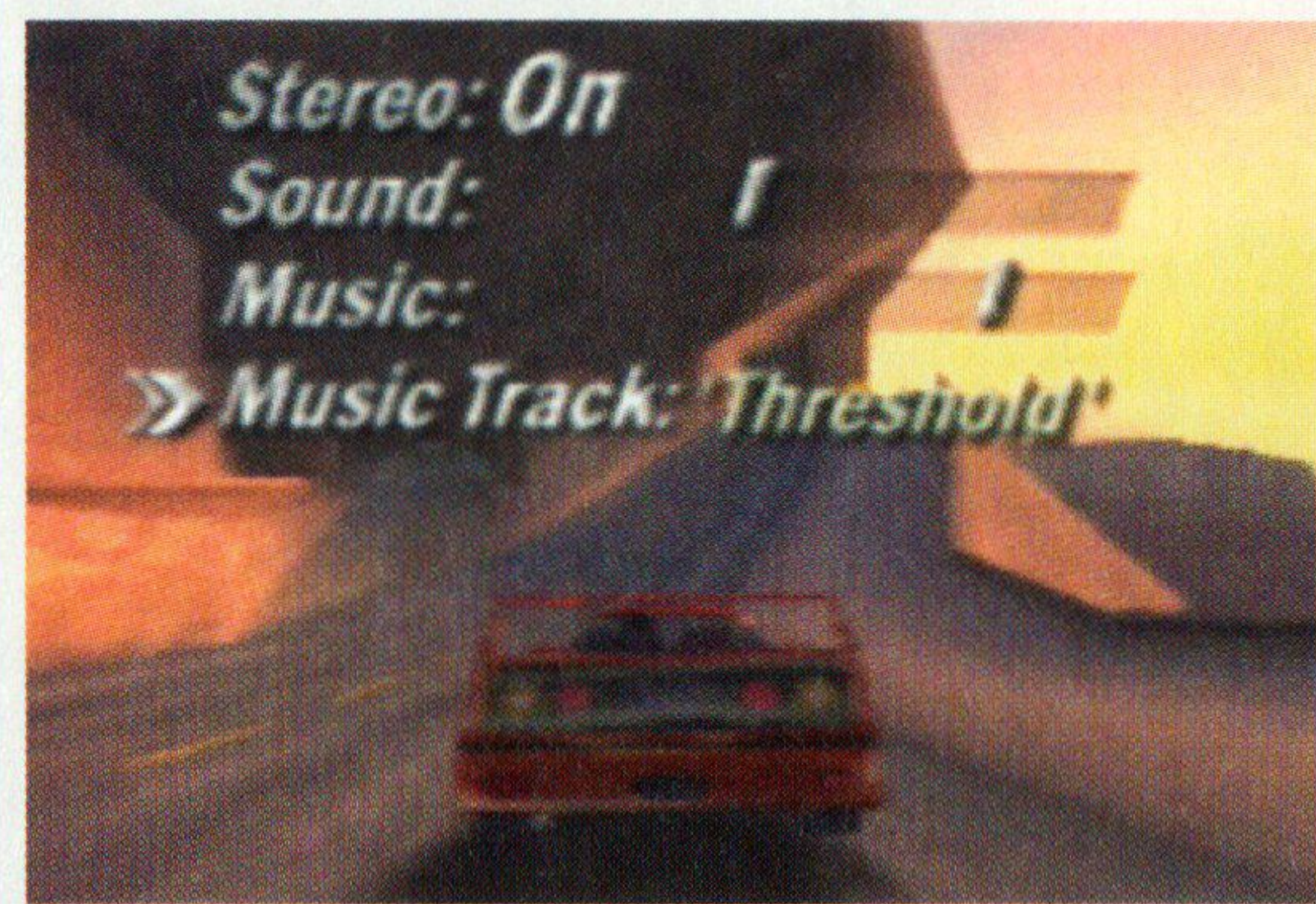
The game, though initially frustrating, is hugely rewarding with a bit of patience. To begin with you'll find that the lack of traction sends you flying all over the road, but cornering must begin before the turn is actually reached, so if you angle the car in the right direction before it actually arrives, you'll soon find yourself sliding through every bend with the best of them.



The game has definitely undergone a huge transformation – the tracks are now full of shortcuts with loads of opportunities for stunts

AND THE BAND PLAYED ON...

Top Gear Overdrive comes bundled with six tracks from American rock band, Grindstone. Although it's not uncommon on the PlayStation, it's a bit of a novelty for the N64 to have tracks with all the vocals still intact. Sadly this sort of heavy guitar music has plagued many racing games in the past, but this isn't actually that bad if you're a fan of that style of music.



One slightly more annoying fault is the ease at which your car blows up. Now I'm not saying that careering into the back of another car at speeds in excess of 100mph wouldn't

You begin the game with a choice of only two cars, the colours of which can be selected from a varied palette. This can be used to upgrade the car's top speed, acceleration and handling, or, if you manage to get enough, buy you an entirely new car.

TGO is compatible with the RAM Expansion Pak, but even without it, it still looks superb. The cars have exceptionally good-looking reflection effects and the game draws the track far into the distance. Fogging is only noticeable when it is supposed to be (i.e. in the swamp levels). It moves along at a pretty rapid pace too, though it's noticeably quicker without your car on the screen

THE CARS HAVE EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD LOOKING REFLECTION EFFECTS AND THE GAME DRAWS THE TRACK FAR INTO THE DISTANCE. FOGGING IS ONLY NOTICEABLE WHEN IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE

significantly damage your bonnet, but, as has been already pointed out, this is not a simulation. Still, the nature of the game does not suit explosive bumpers – a car damage system may have been a better alternative.

I want money

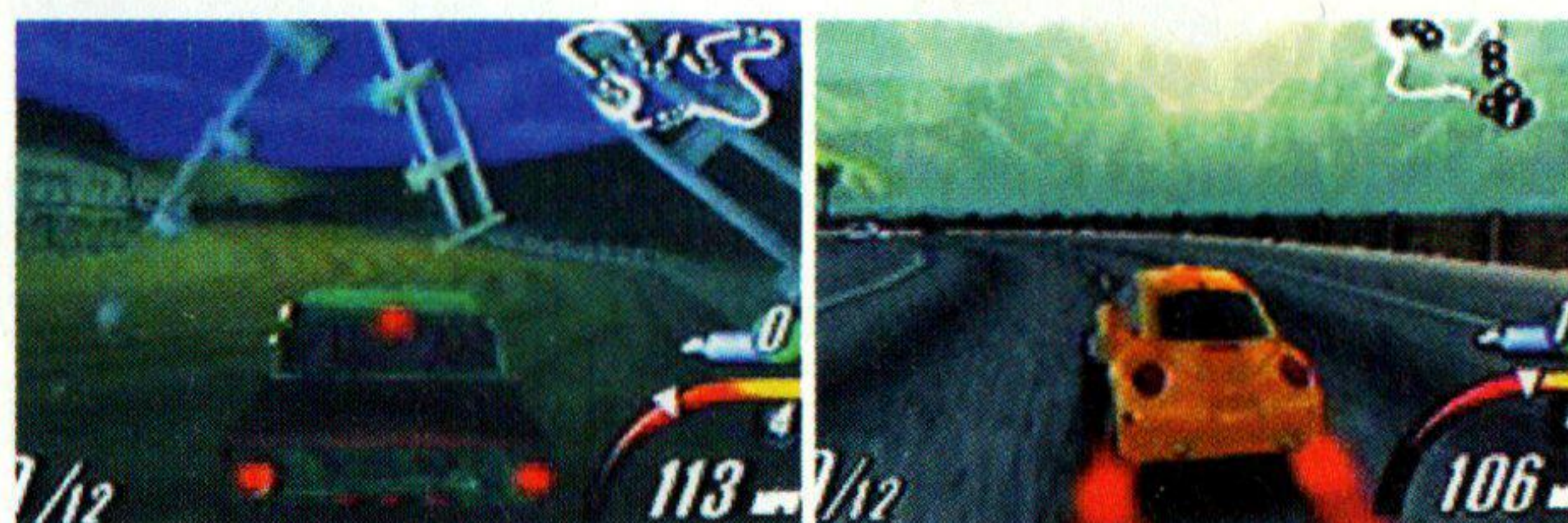
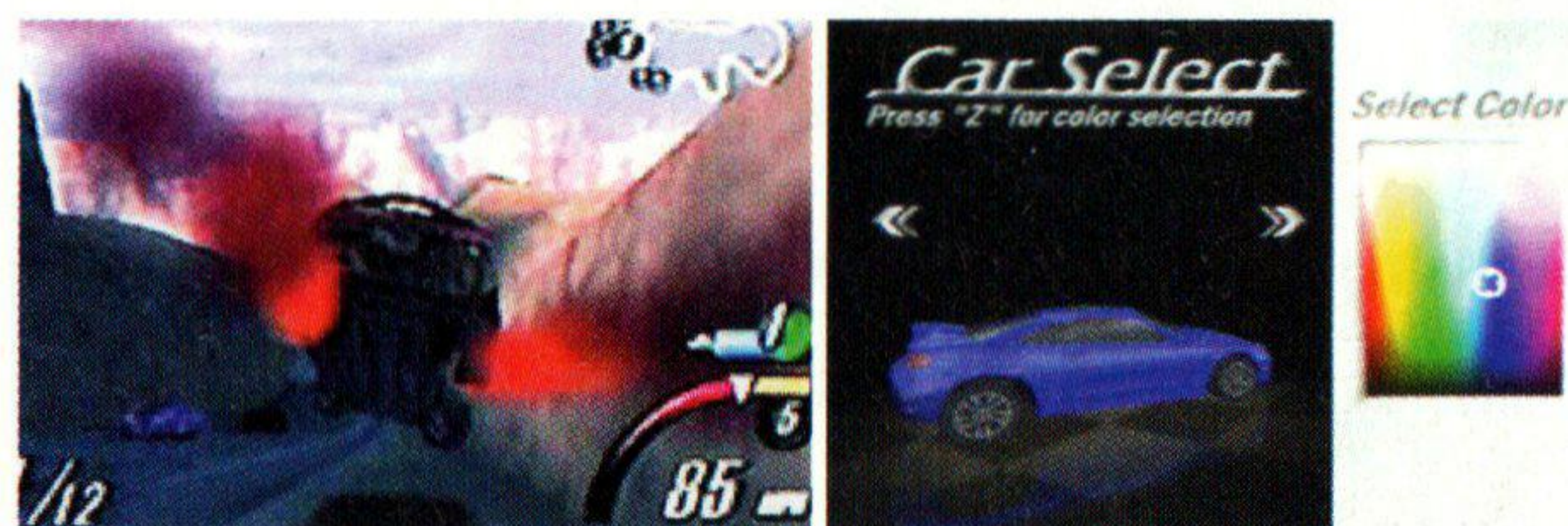
Finishing in the top four (out of twelve) will reward you with some extra cash alongside any of the bonus money found mid-game, and it will also see you through to the next phase of the championship.

There are only seven tracks in the game, but skilled racers will be able to unlock the mirrored courses to race around them all backwards.

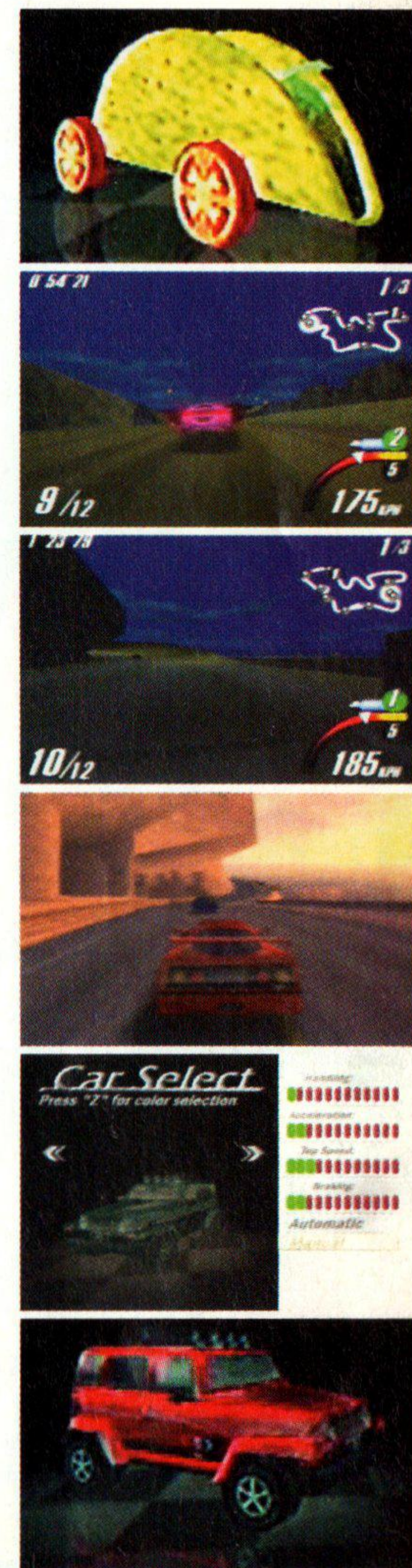
(bumper cam). With the RAM Pak installed it comes close to rivalling 3D accelerated PC titles. Races will initially take place during daylight, but eventually you'll have to cope with rain, snow and night-time settings that can even alter the way your car handles. A four player single race and championship mode has also been included, and they're both surprisingly good.

Medium Rare

Anyone who has been hoping for a decent arcade racer on their N64 won't go far wrong with this. It's not without its faults, but it's a very solid racer that will at least manage to keep us happy while we wait for confirmation for rumours of Rare's proposed N64 answer to *Gran Turismo*. **Will**



The detailed garage feature helps you customise and soup-up your cars before putting them through their paces on the track



The cars are well-designed and look extremely polished

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ●○○○○

It's possible, but highly unlikely. The sheer number of PlayStation racers out there would dissolve any interest in *Top Gear Overdrive* very quickly.

PC ○○○○○

There are no plans to release the game on the PC at the moment, and it's unlikely that there ever will be.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

It's highly unlikely you'll ever see *Top Gear Overdrive* on Sega's new machine, but with the likes of *Sega Rally 2*, I doubt it will be missed too much.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Top Gear Overdrive
GRAPHICS	90
SOUND	91
PLAYABILITY	74
OVERALL	78
Out of 100	



Asghan

Another third-person **fantasy adventure** rolls onto the PC – can **Asghan** survive the competition from **Heretic II**?

TAKING CONTROL

It may not set the scene well, but it looks genuinely nice. After some major problems with the controls, and eventually taking out the first guard, it's off up the cliff trail to practice timing some jumps. Compared to *Heretic II* and *Tomb Raider III* it seems clumsy and dull. Definitely not an enjoyable first fifteen minutes.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Grolier Interactive
DEVELOPER	Silmarils
STYLE	3D Adventure
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£29.99
PLAYERS	One
PROCESSOR	P120 P200
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	20MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

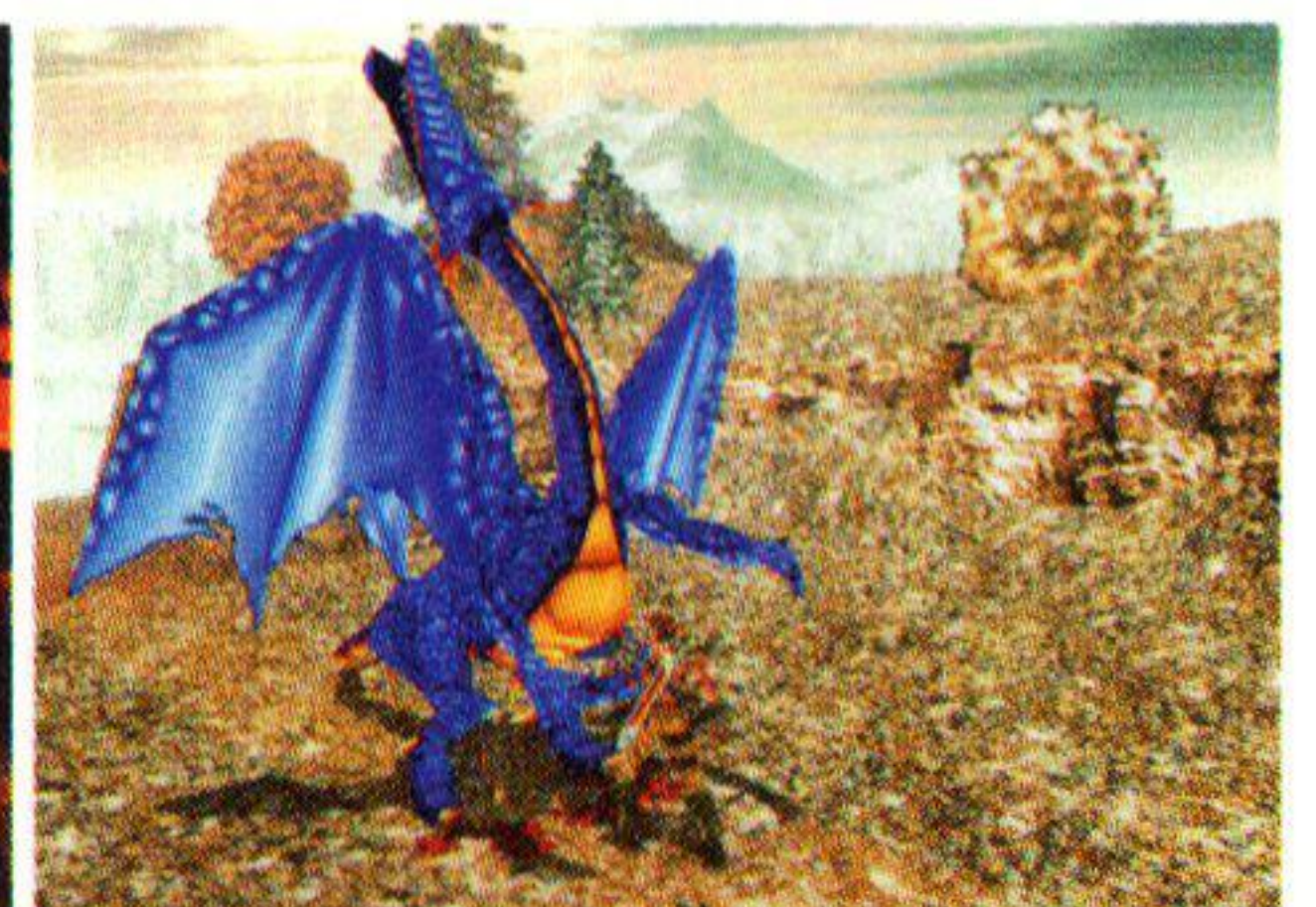
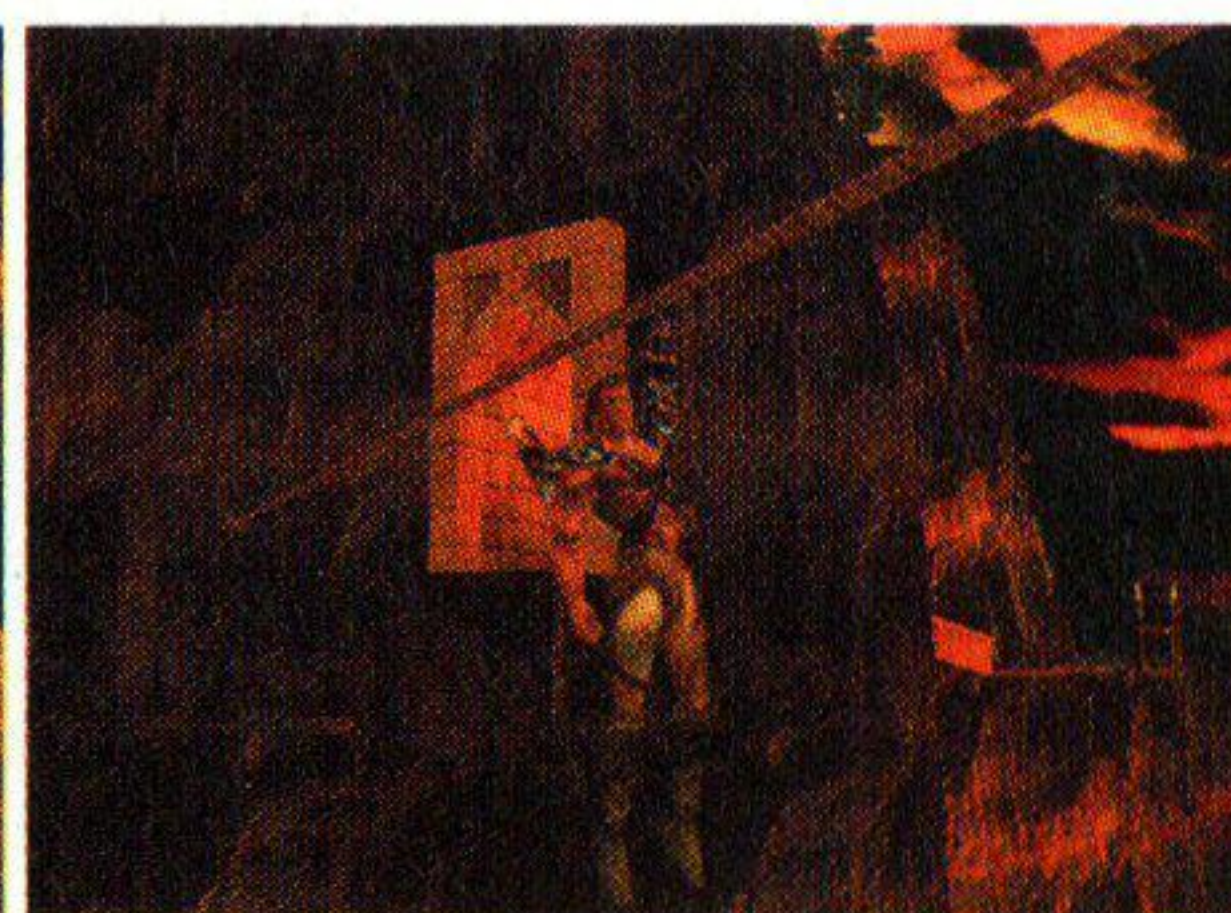
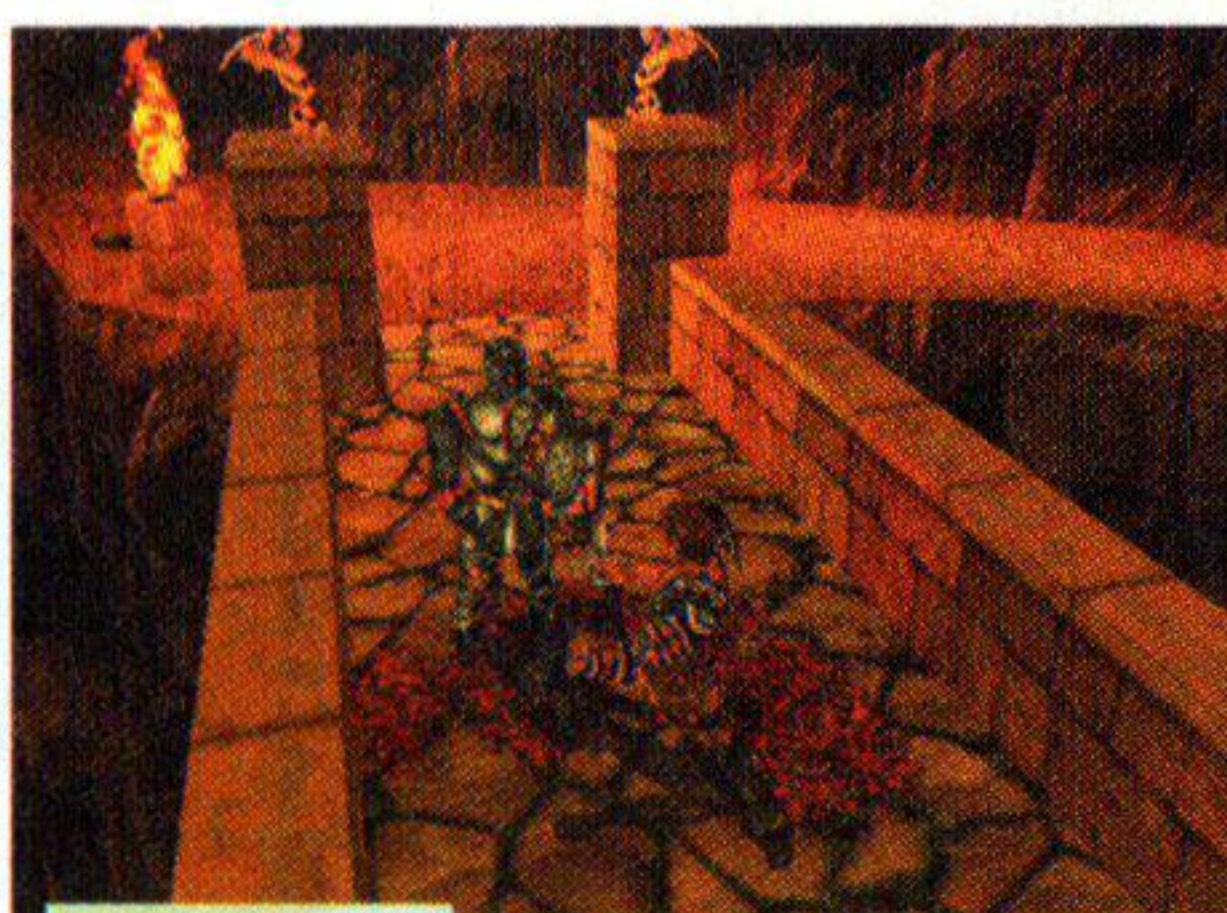
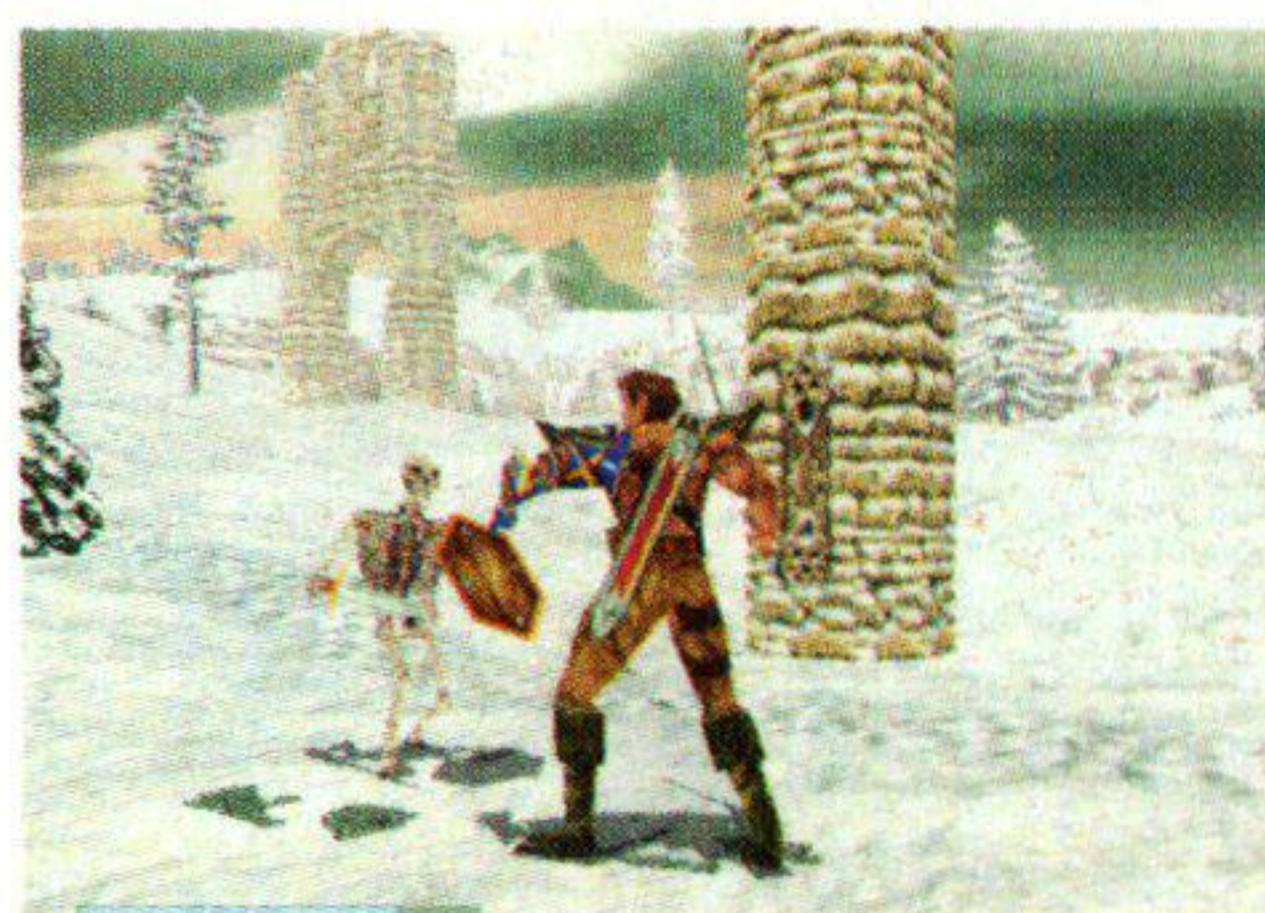
It seems as if *Asghan* has surfaced just a few months too late. With *Tomb Raider III* destined to climb high in the PC charts, and the far superior *Heretic II* also on the shelves, it's difficult to see any niche in the market for Grolier's latest.

The plot is hardly inspiring. You, as Asghan the dragon slayer, decide to travel to the dragon-inhabited island Kyrk, to vanquish the threat of an invasion of your home, Brightmoon.

Whilst there you also hope to gain revenge for your unwarranted banishment from Brightmoon as a child by taking the life of your evil uncle, the powerful magician Morghan.

Trouble in paradise

The game is more or less on a par with the competition in terms of graphics. Many of the areas are huge, with detailed texture mapping and good lighting. The characters are a little too sharp



The later levels become increasingly diverse – as do the enemies, which vary dramatically in size, some being several times your own

ARROW HEAD

As well as your trusty sword, aggressive magic and throwing items, Asghan also has a crossbow that he can use when he has enough ammo – five different types of ammunition can be found for it, including homing and explosive tipped arrows. The crossbow is the only weapon that can be fired in a first-person mode using the mouse.



but they move fluently enough. One of the bigger faults in the game is the poorly implemented control system that is evident very early on. Movement in the game is executed via the keyboard, with extra buttons that can be held to walk and other combinations to roll, jump and grab etc. By holding down the attack button, your standard movement buttons change so that they each represent a different attack. While holding the walk button at the same time, the attack buttons change again, giving access to a variety of roll/attack combos. But movement cannot

THE GAME HAS AN ANNOYING TENDENCY TO DRIVE YOU ALONG THE PREDETERMINED ROUTE, FORCING YOU TO EXPLORE EVERY AREA TO FIND KEYS OR SOLVE EVERY PUZZLE IN ORDER TO PROGRESS

be done when these buttons are held, and the many different key combinations become very awkward to use in the heat of a battle. At times it can be extremely frustrating – especially when fights take place in a confined space. The automatic camera adds to the frustration; moving the mouse will switch it to a manual mode, but it often moves over your head when you back up against a wall so you cannot see yourself. If you are using manual control or the mouse is moved accidentally so you are not visible, you have no idea which way you are facing. Stupidly, there is no option to customise the controls, and while you will get used to them in time, they will never become as instinctive as the systems used in many similar games.

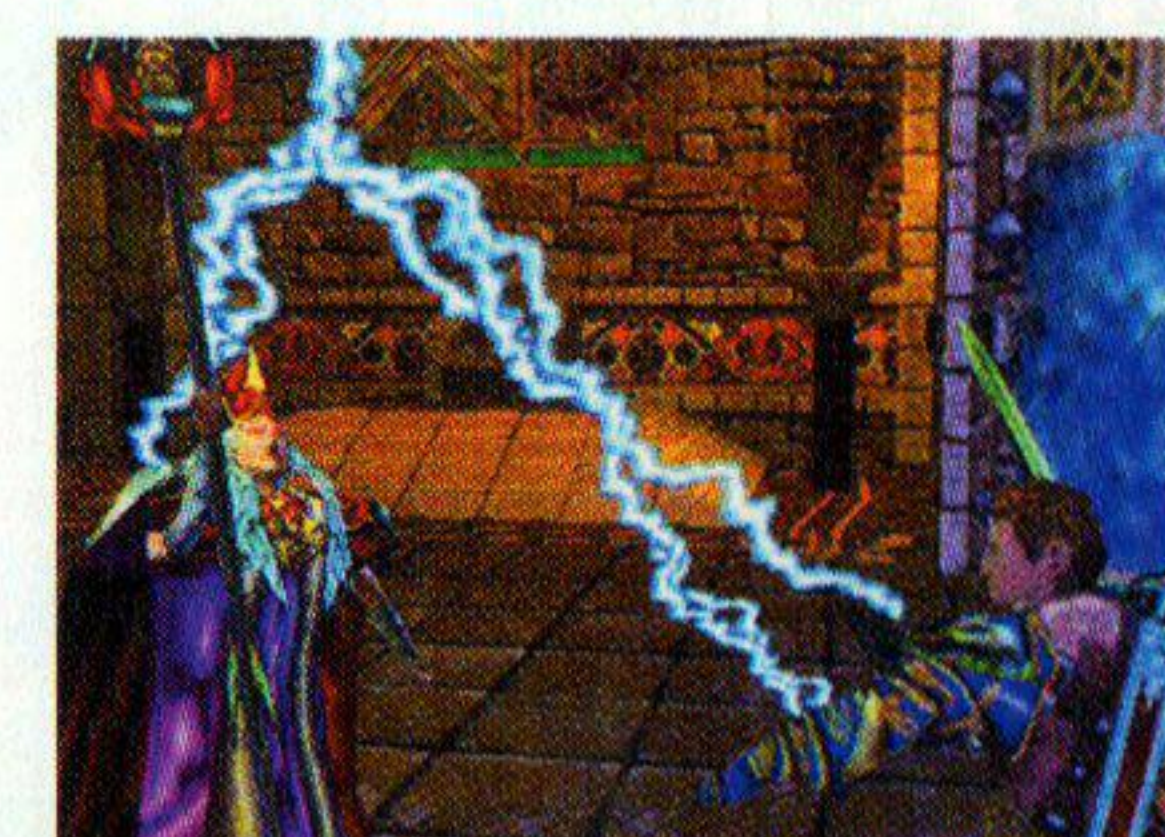
Puzz 3D

Several of the puzzles that must be solved involve timed jumping – one of the most hated formulas in the industry. Another early puzzle has you attempting to remember a drawn-out sequence as it flashes past and then replay it exactly. The



The enemy AI is poor – some only stand still and fire a continuous stream of bullets in your direction

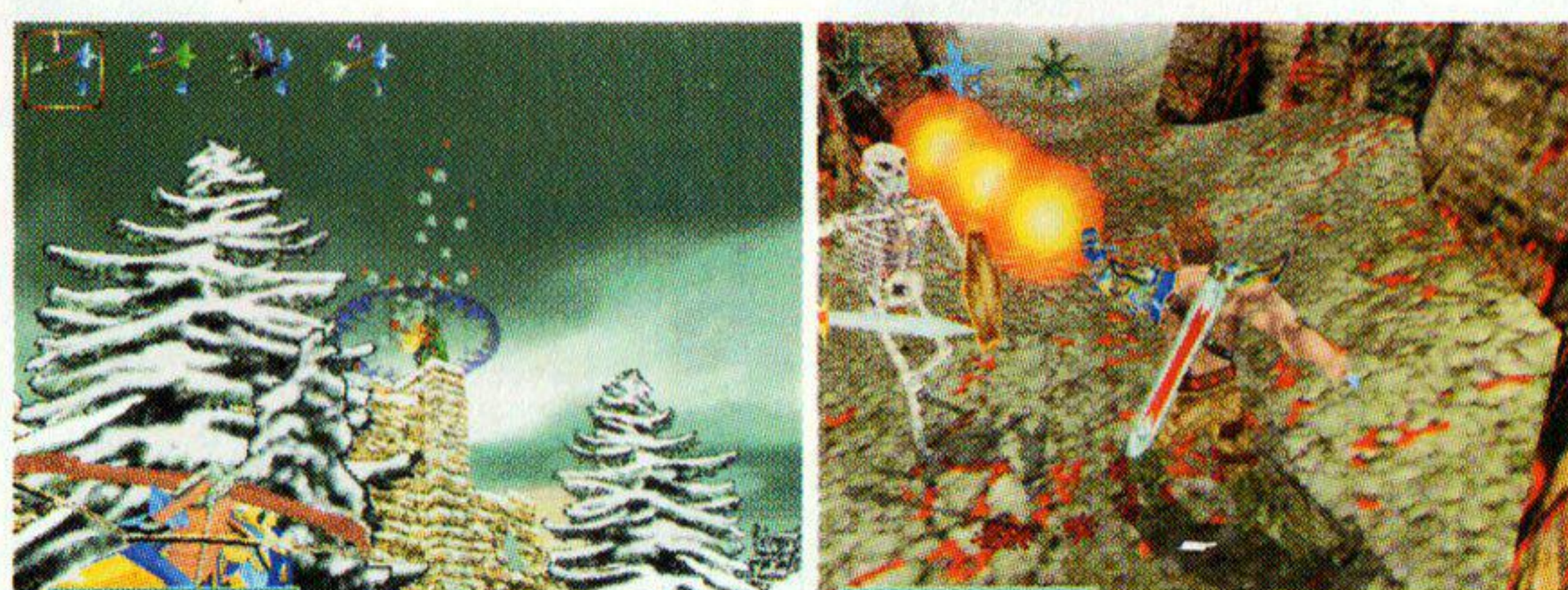
game has an annoying tendency to drive you along the predetermined route, forcing you to explore every area to find keys or solve every puzzle in order to progress – if you miss a door that you can't open, the chances are that while you'll still be allowed to move forwards in the game, you'll have to go back and find a way of opening it later. As you find yourself moving further forwards in the game you notice the lack of direction that you have been given even more, especially when you start backtracking to check you've completed every puzzle and searched every area for useful items. A lot of the enemies also carry important items with them (keys etc.) that you'll need later on, so every one must be hunted down just in case. Because there isn't a lot of health in the game, saving before



Graphically, *Asghan* is almost as good as *Heretic II*

combat is usually crucial to your success. If you lose too much health, reloading your last save and trying again makes things easier for you later on.

Despite its many faults, *Asghan* still has a way of keeping the player interested. As annoying as it can be, you'll still find yourself wanting to go back and try it again. If you find yourself completing *Heretic II* and *Tomb Raider III*, *Asghan* will entertain for a while, but at best, it's only an average title. **Will**



Spells can be created when you find the right ingredients

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ● ○ ○ ○ ○

With a fairly low-key PC release a conversion would seem very unlikely, but you never know...

N64 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Possible, but again it's unlikely that it would be a particularly successful venture.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Asghan
GRAPHICS	77
SOUND	68
PLAYABILITY	44
OVERALL	58
Out of 100	

Rakuga Kids

Is it the latest in a queue of **beat-'em-up casualties** to be **tossed aside unceremoniously**, or could **Rakuga Kids** actually be a worthwhile fighting game **lurking underneath** a ridiculous exterior?



TAKING CONTROL

Within a couple of minutes you have learned how to blow bubbles from your nose and call upon a psychotic elevator. I'm really going to have to lay off those mushrooms...

INFORMATION

FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Konami
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Beat-'em-up
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-2
RUMBLE PAK	Yes
MEMORY PAK	Yes
EXPANSION PAK	Not Supported

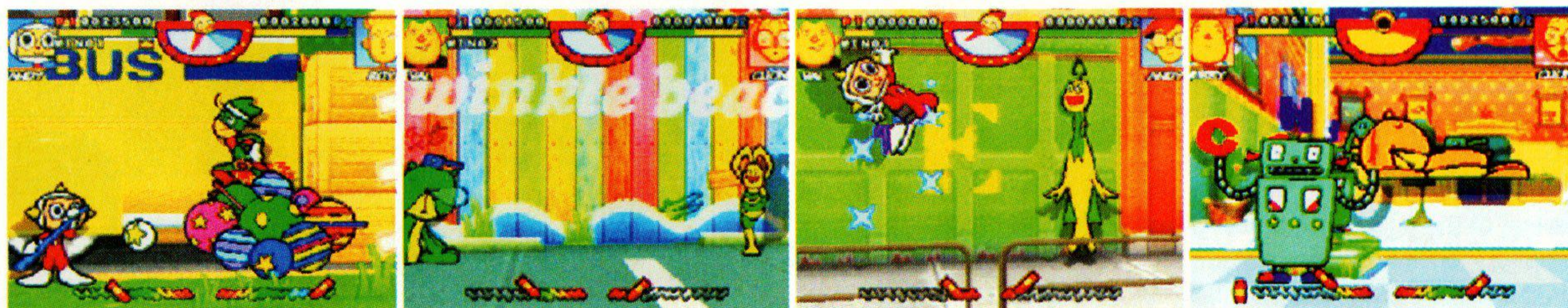
There is clearly not a shortage of game designers on mind-bending drugs in this world – where do you think the name 'designer drugs' came from anyway? *Rakuga Kids* is one of those games that really makes you wonder what the hell these guys have been inhaling, and more importantly, where can we get some?

The game follows the adventures of a group of kids known as the Twinkle Gang, who happen to find a large box of magical crayons outside a temple in Twinkle Town (please feel free to go and be sick if you are over the age of seven-years-old, by the way). Anything the Twinkle Gang draws with their

crayons comes to life, but unfortunately the nasty bully, Val, nicks them.

Instead of drawing willing, full-sized versions of Pamela Anderson and Billie, as any other red-blooded male would, he draws a nasty 'bloke in a cloak' who goes around stirring up trouble and generally being pretty nasty. In return, the Twinkle Gang manage to get the crayons back and draw a bunch of super heroes based on their own personalities.

Not the best storyline behind a beat-'em-up, that's for sure, but it's better than the 'After three million years waiting in purgatory, the evil Zynock summons the greatest fighters from



Characters include a boy from outer-space, a yellow spoon-man in a leotard, and a green tank-cat with bubbly snot!



MAGICAL MAYHEM

Magical special attacks are launched by pressing the R button once a crayon meter has been built up. Here is one of the weirdest you may find yourself encountering...

There are many insane forms of attack in *Rakuga Kids*, which is perhaps its most impressive feature. Someone at Konami has one hell of an imagination!

around the world to see which is the hardest in a tournament of deadly proportions' that we normally have to put up with.

Here comes the Rak-Daddy

N64 owners are not lacking in many departments these days, having decent games in just about every genre. One thing they are lacking, however, is a decent beat-'em-up, or at least one that does not involve sweaty men in pants pretending to hit each other. Any developer who bothers to put the time and effort into making a *Tekken 3* quality fighting game would clean up big time. Have Konami done the wise thing here?

Not exactly... I can just picture the board meeting now. "The proposal is to take a fighting engine similar to that seen in the world-wide smash hit *Clayfighter*, and incorporate crayon-based elements into it". What was the board's response? "Actually, that's just what we were thinking"...? And that, I'm afraid, is not actually an unrealistic description of the strangeness that is *Rakuga Kids*.

The graphics are fully two-dimensional, and are inferior to many SNES games I was enjoying seven years ago. Having said that, though, they are pretty stylish, especially as far as character design goes. Some of the Twinkle Gang's

AFTER A WHILE, RAKUGA KIDS DISSOLVES INTO MINDLESS BUTTON-BASHING, AND THERE IS NO CHANCE OF ANYTHING RESEMBLING COMPLEX COMBO MANOEUVRES BEING PULLED OFF

heroes include a tank-cat who blows bubbles of snot out of his nose, a yellow shape-changing spoon ghouel and a girl who wears a chicken on her head. Doesn't she know chicken hats went out of fashion last year?

The actual fighting system will be familiar to fans of the *Street Fighter* games on the SNES, as it is basically the same. You have a light, medium and hard punch and kick, and the combos required to pull off special moves are very familiar, in a right-down-right-punch type of way. Pressing the buttons rarely

actually produces a punch or a kick – you're more likely to find that it produces an Afro, some maracas, or a basketball.

After a while, however, it dissolves into mindless button-bashing, and there is no chance of anything resembling complex combo manoeuvres being pulled off. The combat moves are indeed the strangest you will ever see, but these look tame when compared to the special moves. By building up the crayon metre, your character gains the ability to unleash one of these marvellous specialties, which include telephoning for a pizza so the delivery boy will run your opponent over or sending him into space tied onto the back of a space rocket. Cukoo!

Who is the joke on?

One major problem with the game is the difficulty level, which is just about non-existent. It is possible to whizz through the game on 'medium' in about ten minutes on your first go, and you won't feel the need to play it ever again. *Rakuga Kids* does provide plenty of laughs in two player, but again, only for a very limited time.

You could argue that I'm not the target audience and that eight-year-old kids would love it... well, if eight-year-old kids are the same these days as I was when I was that age, they would much rather be fragging Dinosaurs in *Turok 2*

than wasting time with this painfully average release.

All in all, *Rakuga Kids* is just another wasted opportunity. It's not actually a bad game, but neither is it one that deserves to have the name Konami on the box, especially not in the year 1999. Konami are the developers of some of the best games in the world ever, and having *Rakuga Kids* come from the developers of the *Contra* series, the *Castlevania* series, the *ISS* series, and *Metal Gear Solid* is a joke. A joke indeed, but just not in the way that Konami hoped it would be. **Jon**



OTHER FORMATS?

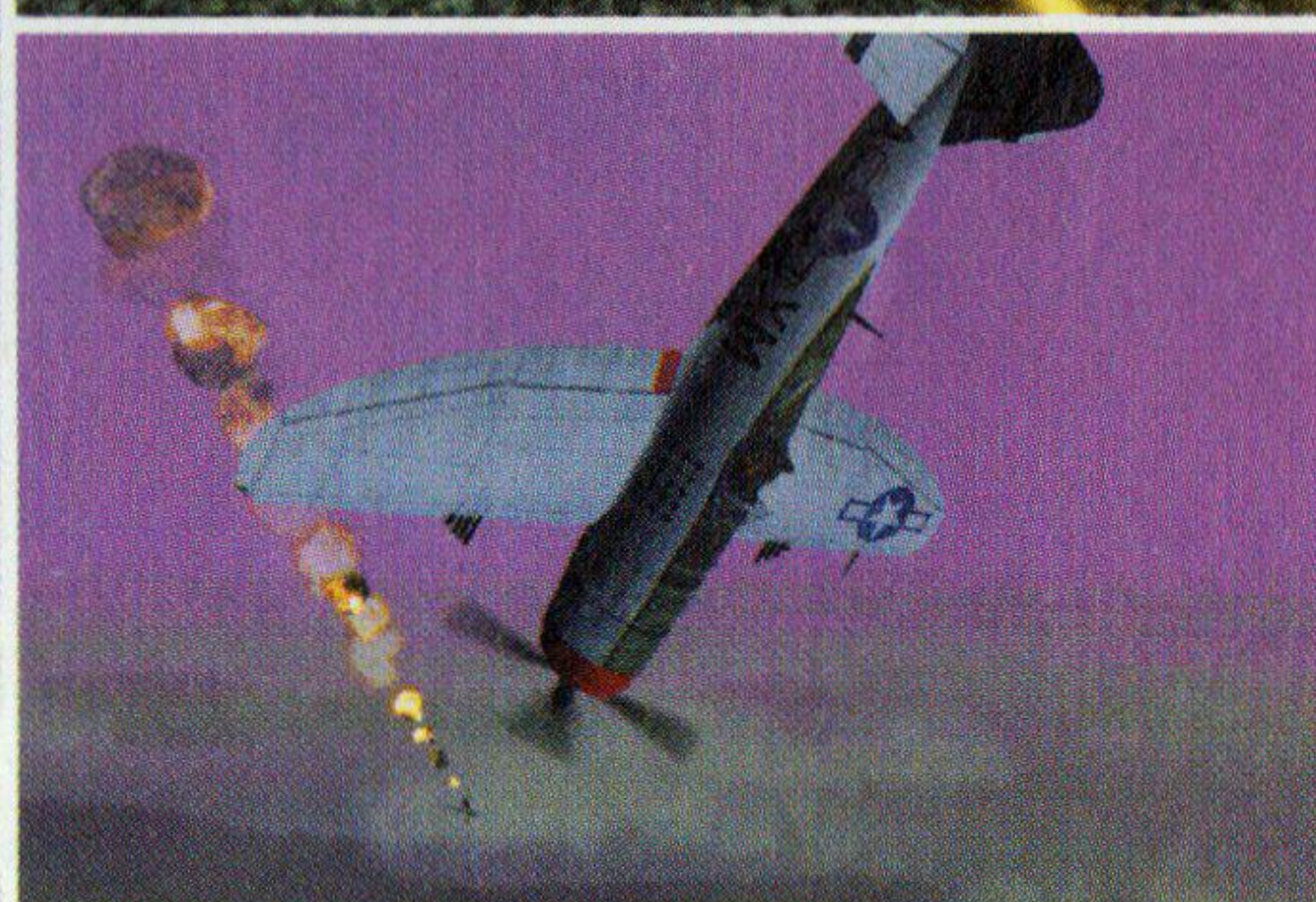
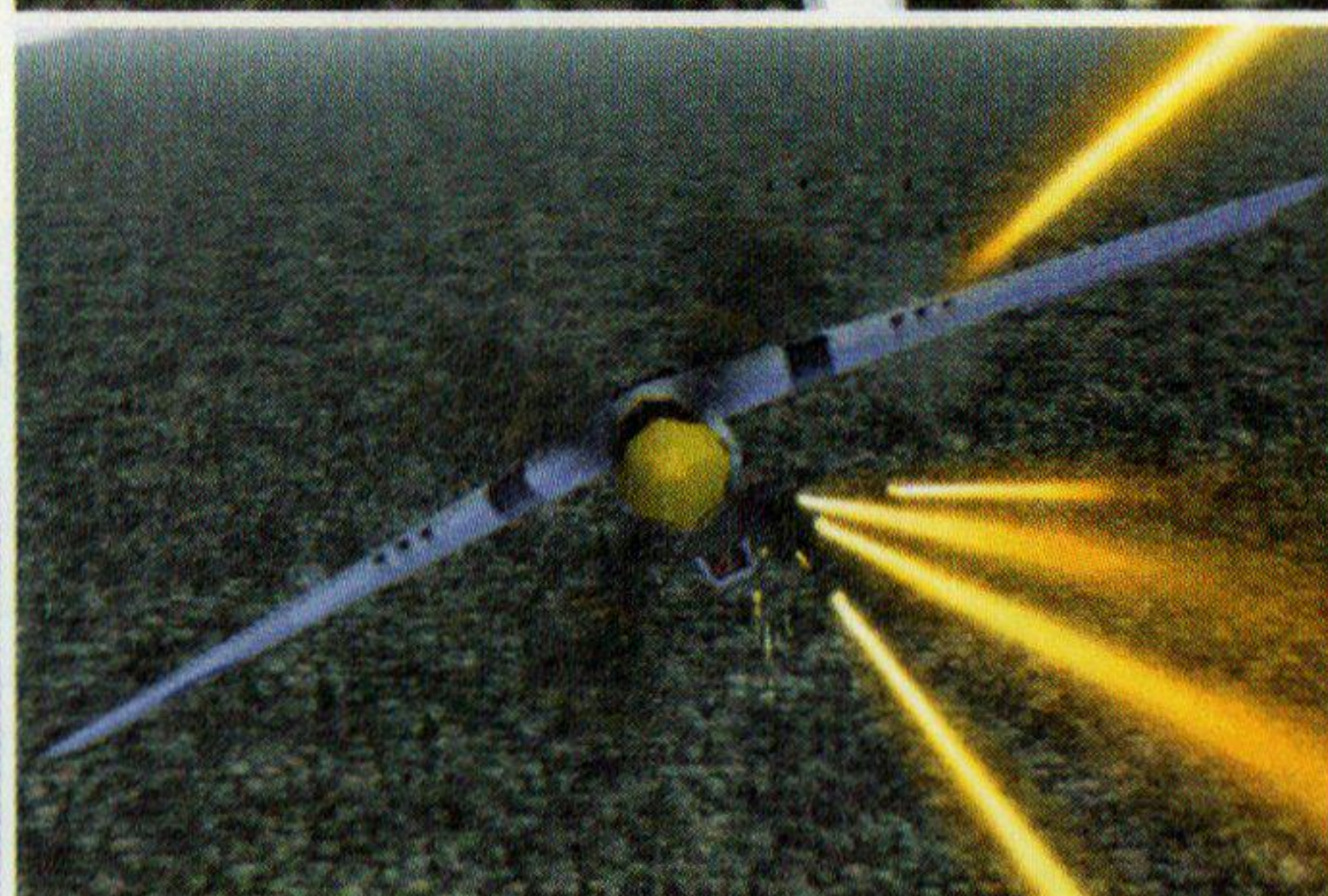
PC ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
It doesn't really suit the PC owning demographic, does it?

PlayStation ● ○ ○ ○ ○
It's certainly possible, but why on earth would they bother?

Dreamcast ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Not much chance, although it is much more fun than *July!*

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Rakuga Kids
GRAPHICS	52
SOUND	44
PLAYABILITY	50
OVERALL	51
Out of 100	



World War II Fighters

TAKING CONTROL

In common with most recent flight sims, Jane's *WWII Fighters* has an instant action option, and the truly impatient amongst you can go straight to it from the desktop. At once you are in the cockpit of a P51 Mustang over the Ardennes in 1944. The atmosphere is compelling, and you immediately start looking around for something to shoot at. The ground detail looks a bit lame, but the planes are top notch.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Flight Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-8
PROCESSOR	P200 P300
MEMORY	32MB 64MB
DISK SPACE	256MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Required

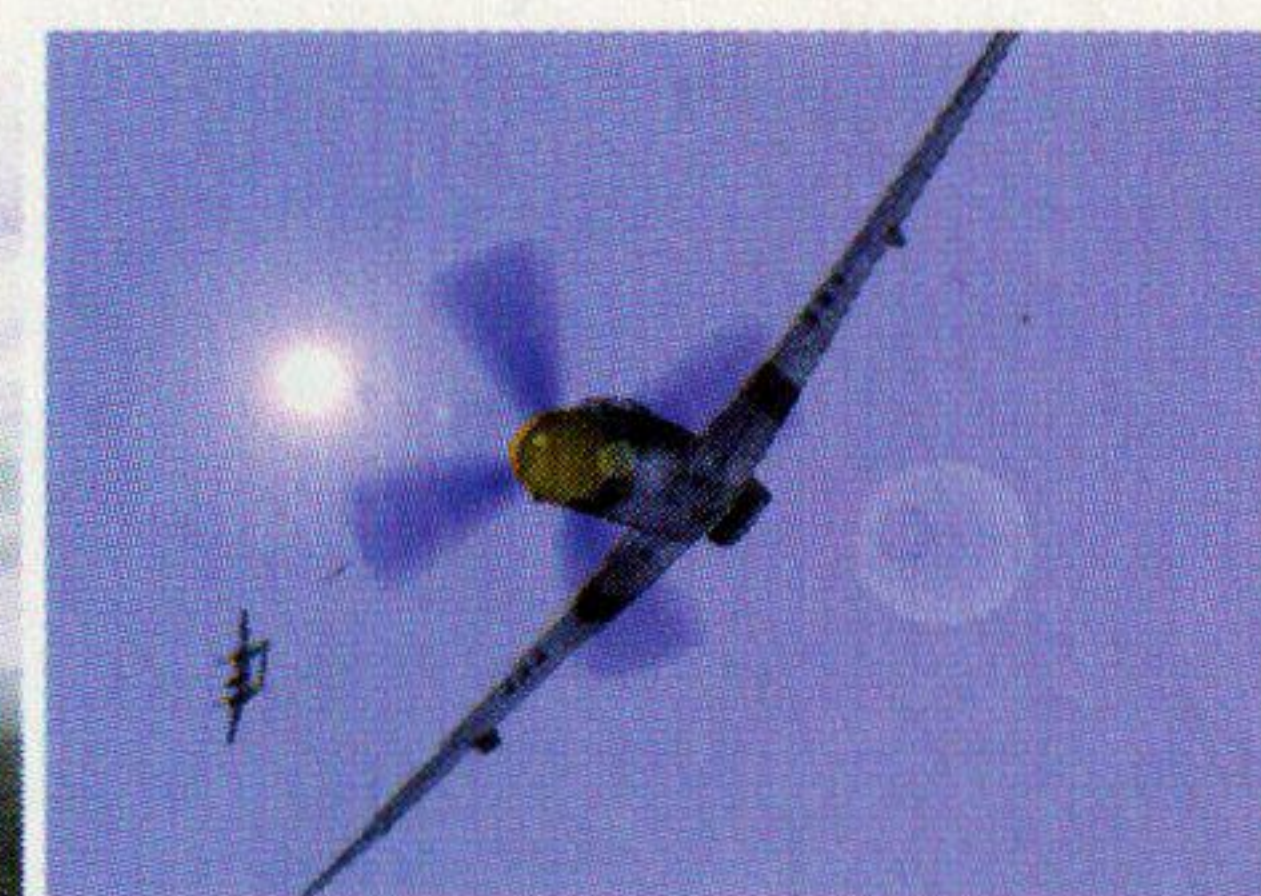
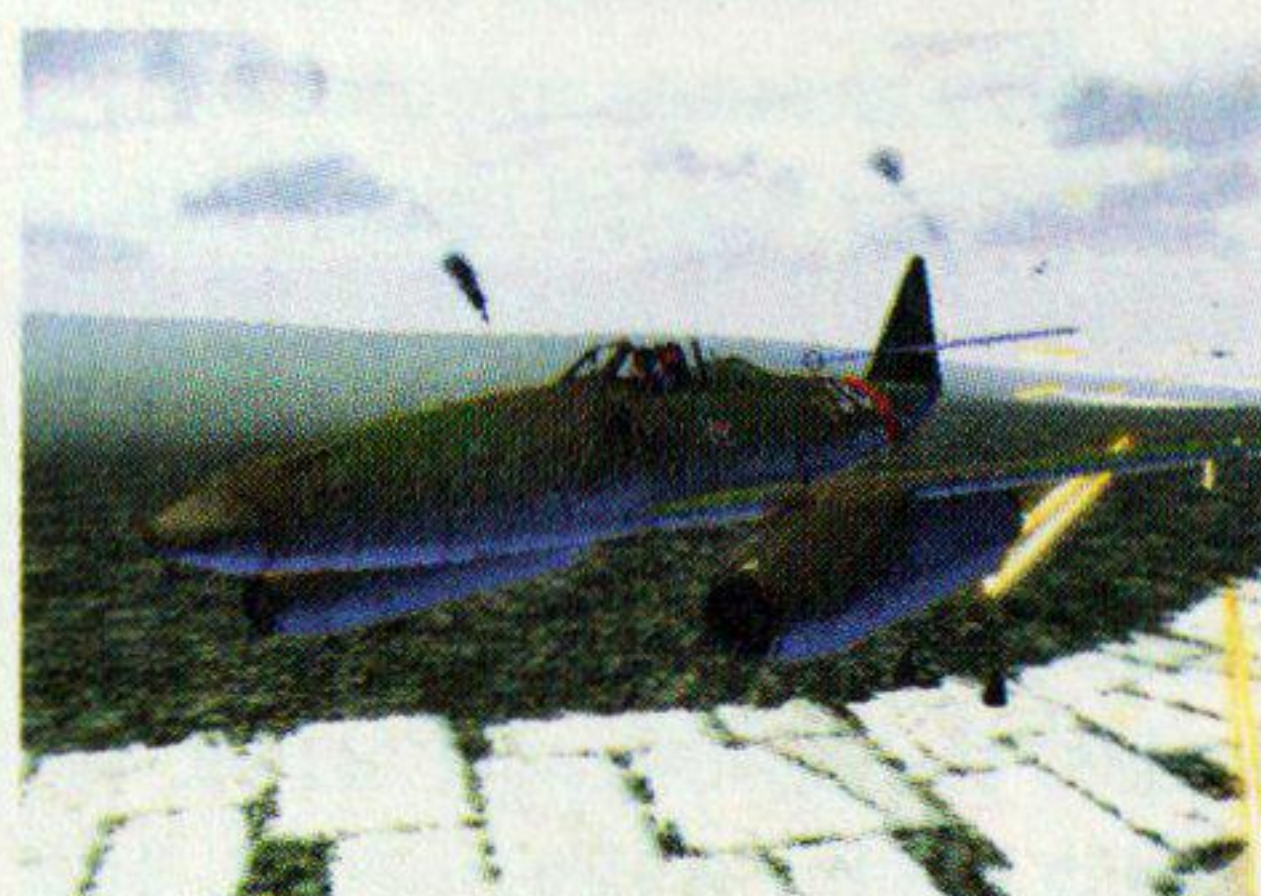
Fly air cover for **General Patton** in this distinctly **American version** of **World War Two** air combat...

There are quite a few good World War Two flight sims around at the moment. Microsoft's *Combat Flight Simulator* is technically impressive, but definitely one for the professionals. *European Air War* from Microprose offers a great line-up of planes from both sides and extreme realism, although the missions are a little bit dull. Activision's *Fighter Squadron: Screaming Demons over Europe* certainly has the longest title, and is perhaps the most technically impressive of the three. Game giants, Electronic Arts have entered the dogfight with a game published under their Jane's Combat Simulations brand. *World War II Fighters* is based around a two week period during the Ardennes Offensive in 1944, the engagement that has become known as the Battle of the Bulge.

Here come the Yanks

Like a lot of games focusing on World War II, this one has a distinctly American slant. The battles that took place around the Ardennes were among the ones in which the Americans were most heavily involved, so it is no surprise that the game centres on this period of the war. The American bias is even more noticeable when you look at the list of planes featured in the game. There are seven in total, of which three are American – the P-51 Mustang, the P-38 Lightning and the P-47 Thunderbolt.

There are three German planes – the Focke-Wulf Fw 190 and two Messerschmitts, the Bf 109 and the jet-powered Me 262 – but there is only one British fighter, which is, of course, the magnificent Spitfire. No Hurricane, no Mosquito, neither

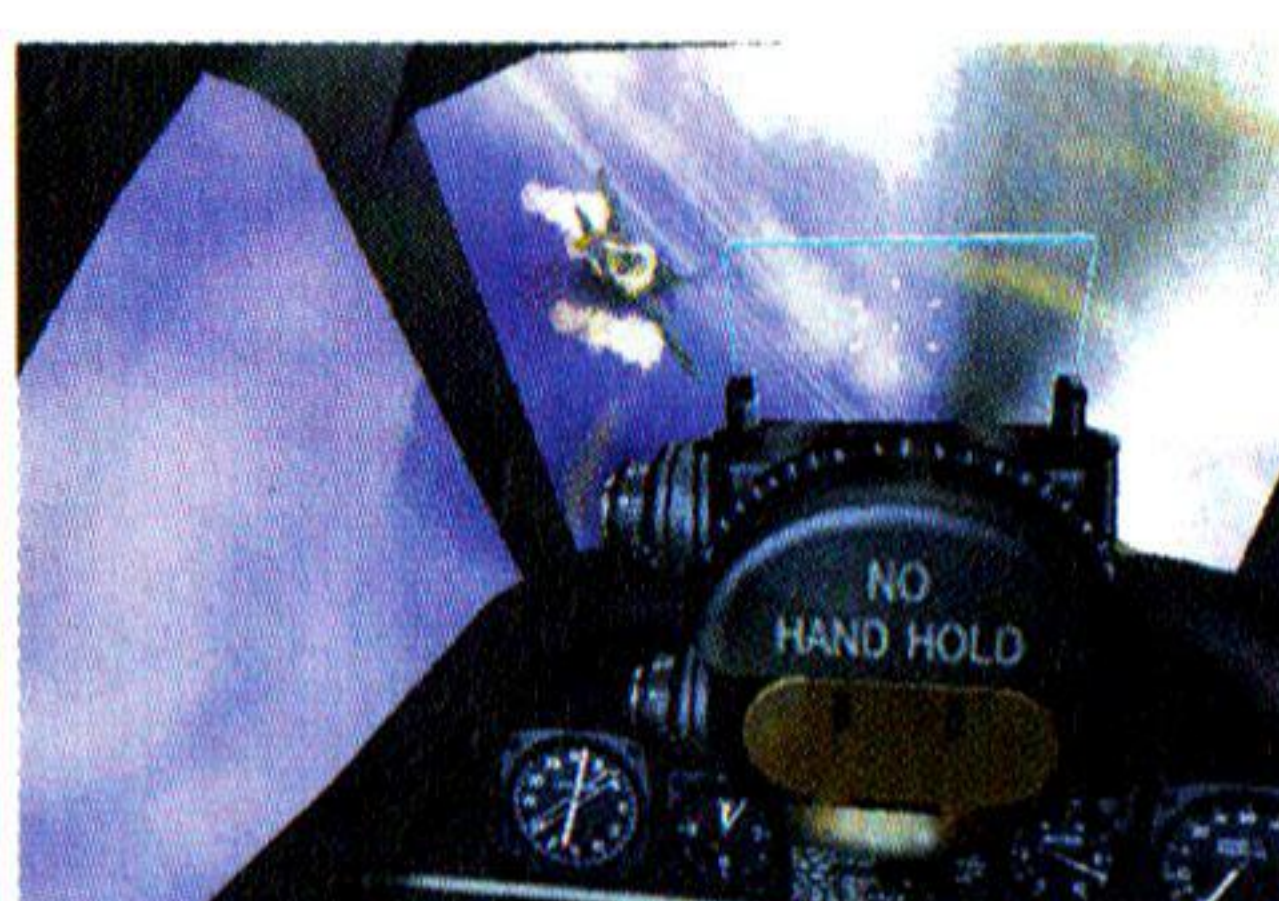
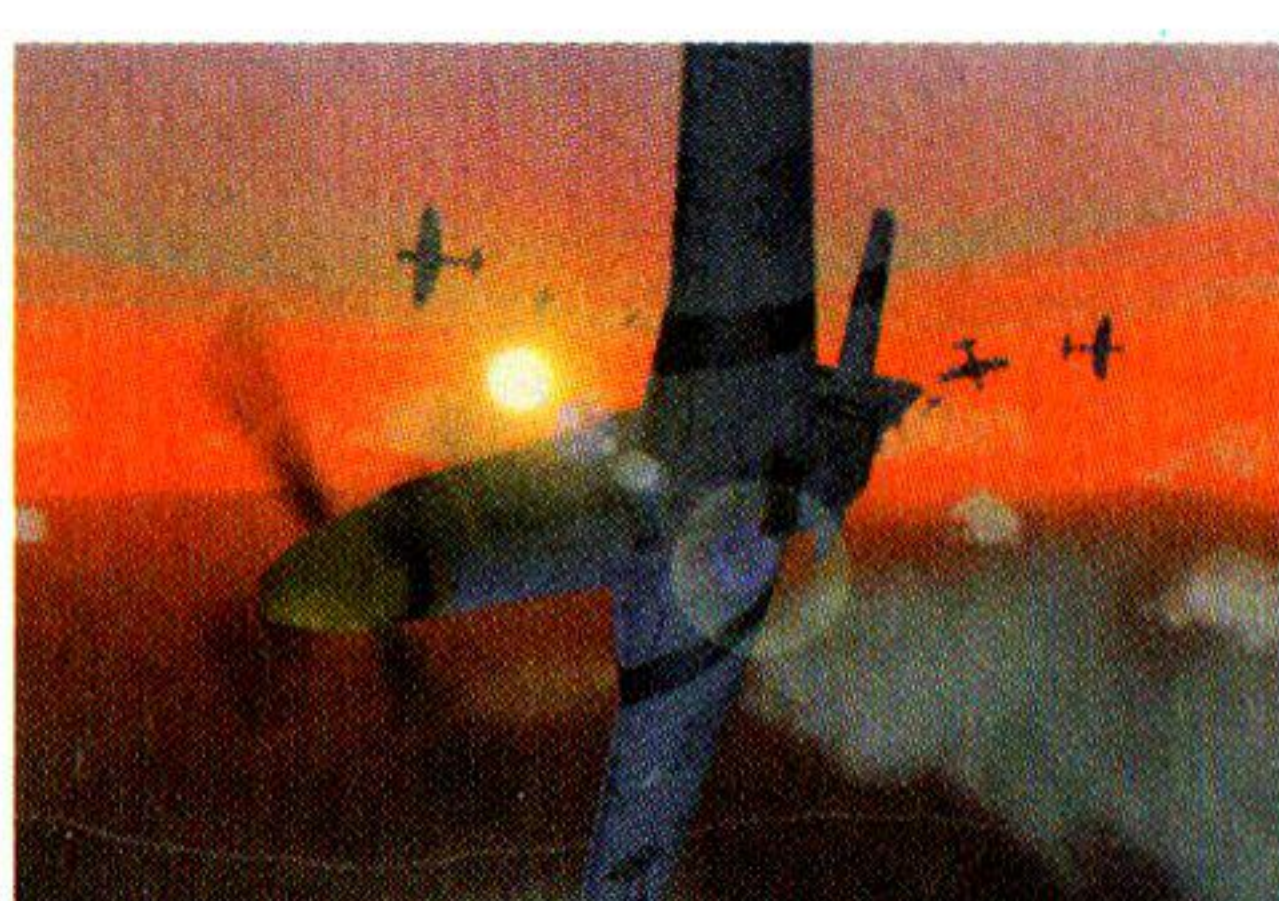
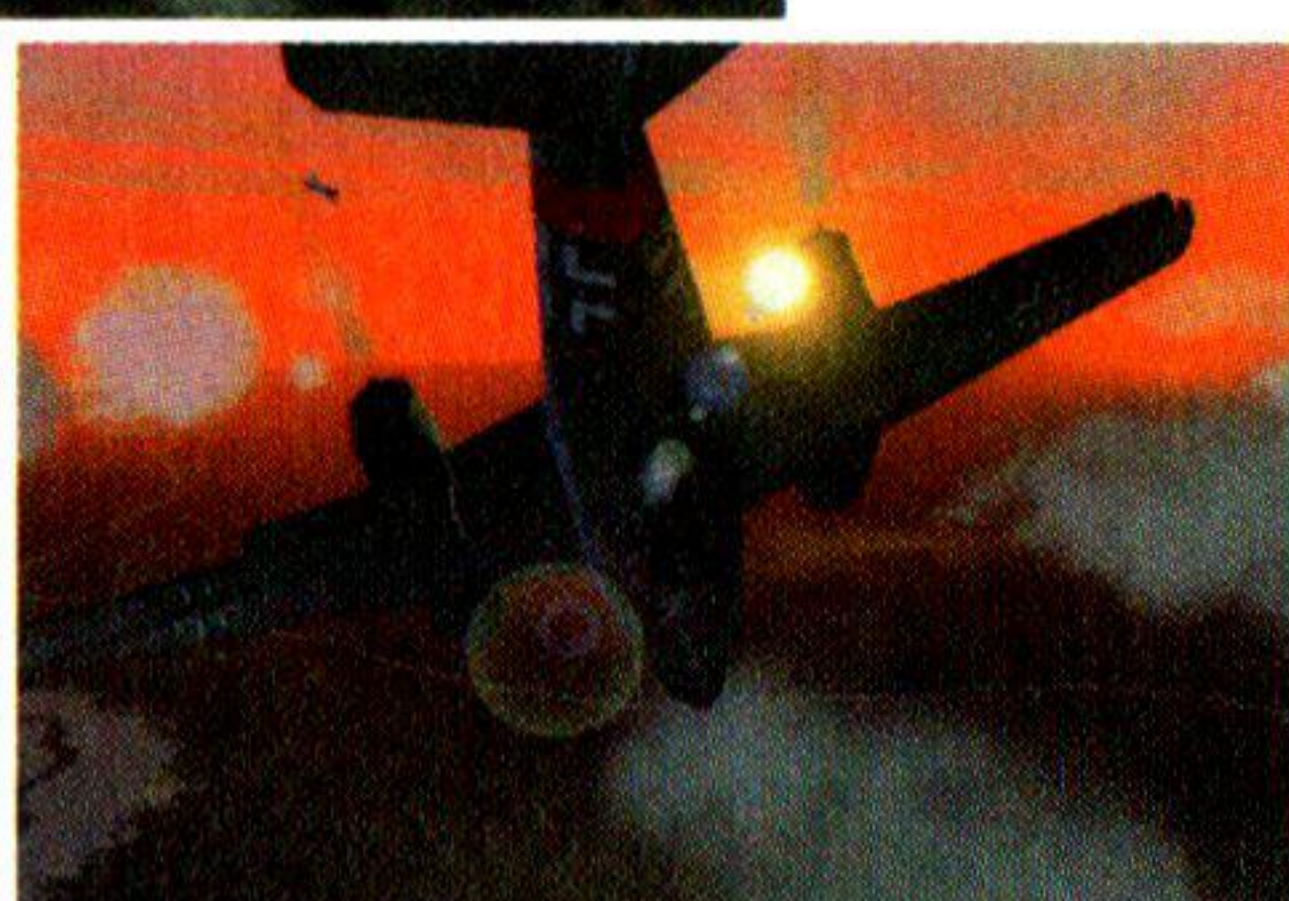
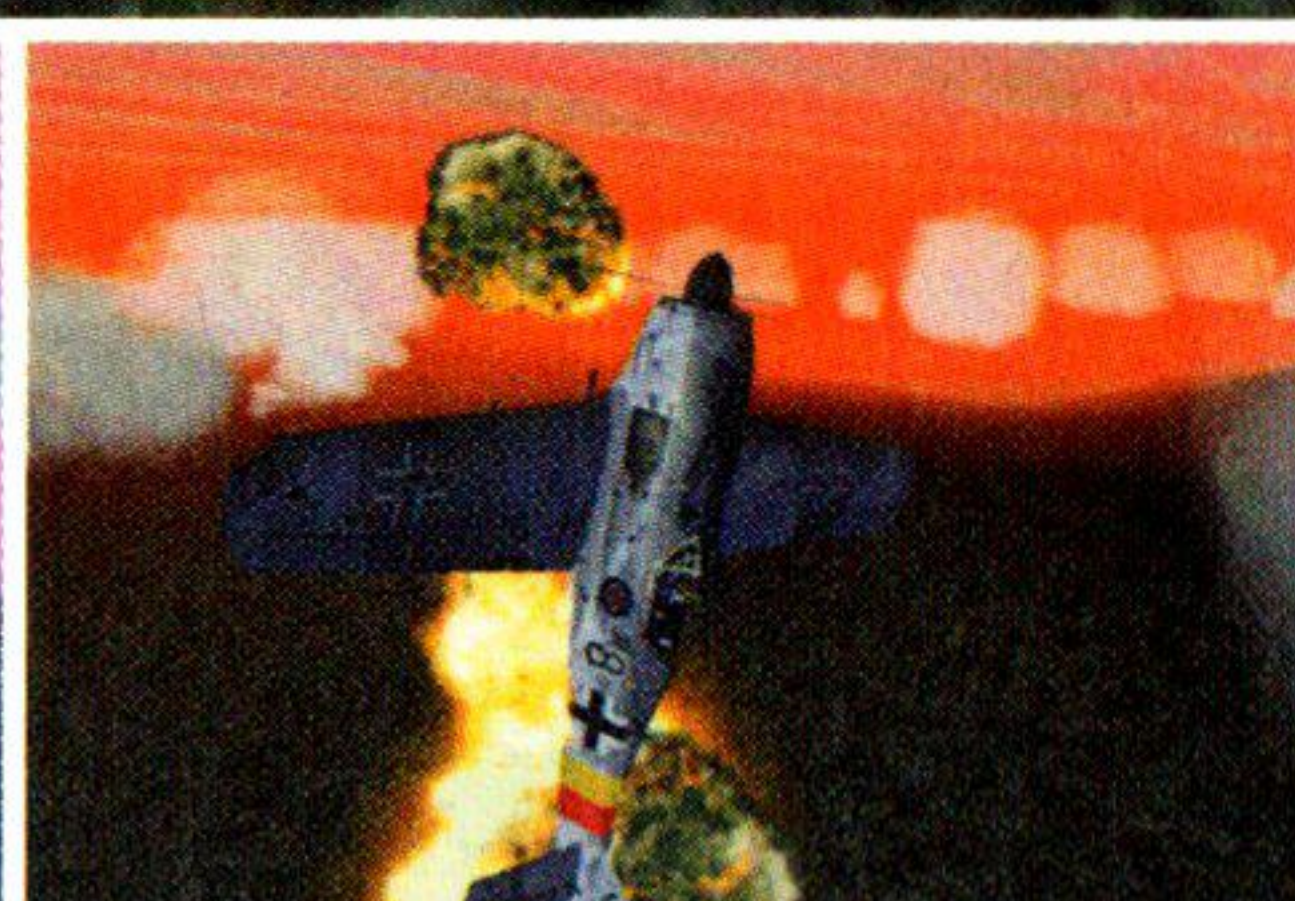


The range of aircraft is pretty limited, with only six of the World War II Fighters to choose from, and only one of those is British



A VIEW FROM THE HOT SEAT

Long before Electronic Arts came along offering lucrative games licence deals, Jane's was the name on the most authoritative books on military topics to be found anywhere. Jane's Defence Weekly is still the standard reference on the most up-to-date fighting machines, so it comes as no surprise that their historical knowledge is detailed and exhaustive. The aircraft featured in *World War II Fighters* are recreated with almost perfect accuracy, especially the superb 3D virtual cockpits. Modelled on the real thing, the cockpits are crammed with real moving instruments and controls. If you move your PC joystick, the stick in the cockpit moves with it. You can look around you, as well as up and down, enabling you to spot enemy planes closing in on you from behind. Of course getting out of the way with your skin intact is another matter entirely.



The life expectancy of a fighter pilot during World War II was supposed to be about two weeks. With this much action going on you'll be lucky if you last two minutes

Typhoon nor Tempest. This one-sided view of history is all too common and may put some British players off the game. Both Microprose's *European Air War* and Activision's *Fighter Squadron* have a more balanced range of aircraft.

This way up

The game interface is in the form of an aircraft museum, complete with some clever program-generated 1940s big band music. You can take a look around the exhibits, watch historical film of the planes in action and even have a quick test flight. They don't let you do that at Yeovilton! As you might expect from a product bearing the illustrious Jane's brand, the aircraft that are featured are painstakingly accurate in every detail – especially the excellent real-time 3D virtual cockpit. The flight modelling is very good, and all of the aircraft handle in what

THERE ARE TWO COMPLETE CAMPAIGNS, ONE FOR THE AXIS AND ONE FOR THE ALLIES, PLUS 35 SINGLE PLAYER MISSIONS

appears to be a very realistic manner. Obviously I've never flown a real Spitfire, but in this simulation it is a much easier plane to glide home in than the Fw 190, and handles better than the chunky P-47, which seems about right.

Damage to the aircraft adversely affects the handling, although I was rather puzzled to find that it is possible to hit the ground, bounce and carry on flying. I'm damn sure I'm not that good a pilot!

I can see your house

The accelerator-only graphics look superb, with 3D translucent clouds and sunlight glinting off the wings of the aircraft. The game maintains a good frame rate even when the sky is full of planes, and everything runs very smoothly. Explosions and flames are also well-handled; if you shoot down an enemy plane, you can follow its journey to the ground by the trail of black smoke streaming behind it. The skies are beautifully done, and the various weather conditions are very realistic. The only downside is the ground detail, or rather the lack of it.

There appear to be only two landscape texture maps in the game – a sort of splodgy green-grey for one and generic snow for the other. There are some features such as rivers and roads, but they are so lacking in detail it is hard to say which is which. The only structures to be seen on the ground are those which form part of your mission. Compare that with either the Microprose or Microsoft rivals and the EA offering falls down badly.

I've pranged my kite

In terms of the actual gameplay, the campaign mode is quite a challenge. Assuming you can find the runway you are meant to take off from without getting yelled at by the control tower (and can take off without crashing), you will find some well-designed missions ahead of you. The missions have multiple objectives, and the plot line of the campaign branches depending upon your success. There are two complete campaigns, one for the Axis and one for the Allies, plus 35 single player missions. There is also a quick mission generator that allows you to create an infinite variety of tailor-made encounters. You are helped by an on screen target view window and a big red arrow pointing at your next objective, which may not be too realistic but is welcome nonetheless.

One of the few

For those of you who prefer live prey, you can play *World War II Fighters* over the Internet via the Jane's Combat Net. Up to eight people can play on-line at once in a variety of scenarios. The game can also be played over a local network if you are lucky enough to have access to one.

On the whole this is a competent flight sim with some nice details, but I'd probably go for either Microprose's *European Air War* or Activision's *Fighter Squadron: Screaming Demons over Europe*. Both have the edge over the EA product in terms of graphical sophistication, range of aircraft available and the all-important playability. **Cliff**

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ○○○○○

EA have no plans to release *World War II Fighters* on the PlayStation. It would run far too slowly and the graphics wouldn't be as good.

N64 ○○○○○

Conversions of PC CD-ROM games to the N64 present a number of problems, mostly about the storage space and, in this case, the music.

Dreamcast ●○○○○

Although there are currently no plans to convert *World War II Fighters* to the Dreamcast, the ease with which this could be done makes it a faint possibility.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	World War II Fighters
GRAPHICS	65
SOUND	75
PLAYABILITY	75
OVERALL	70
Out of 100	



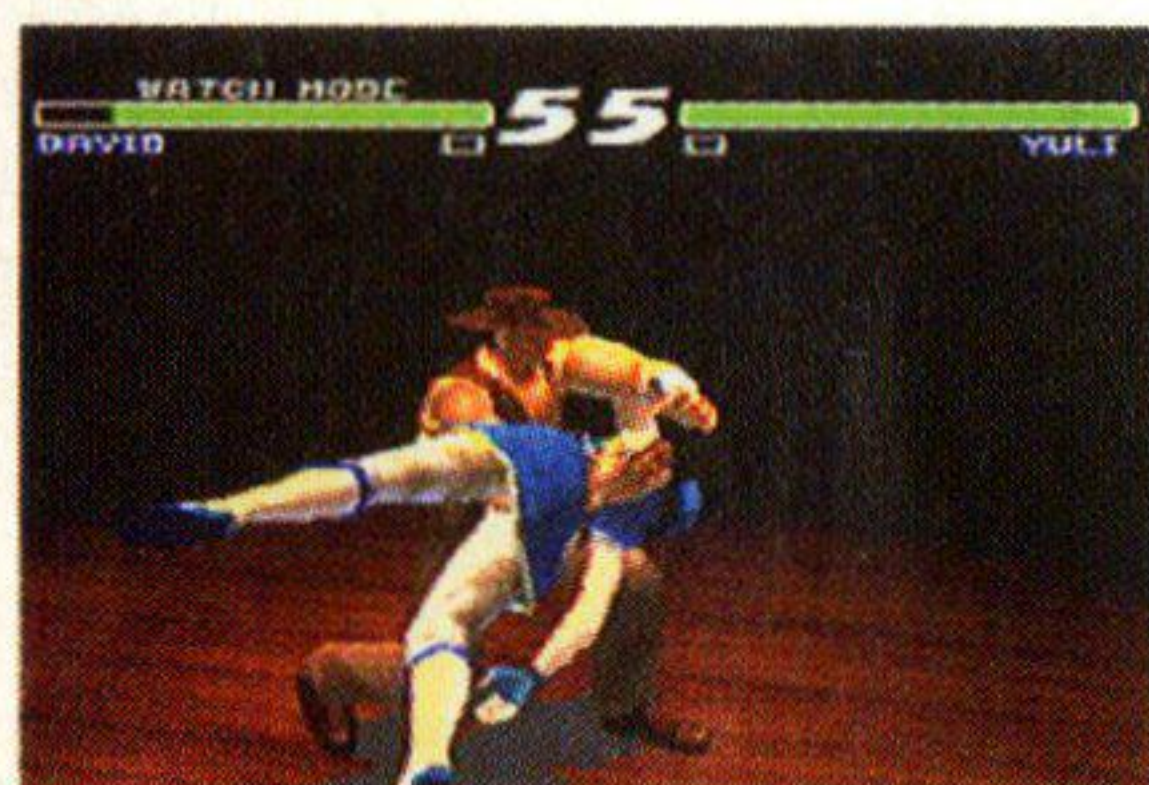
TAKING CONTROL

The initial impression of *Kensei* is that it looks a lot like three or four other titles, not least *Tekken 2*. It feels slower than I'd like but has a certain elegance to it, and it's fairly easy to deliver some very satisfying combos. The controls are simple to master, and the animation is smooth and well-controlled.



Kensei: Sacred Fist

The undisputed king of **PlayStation fighting games** is **Namco's mighty *Tekken 3***, but now Konami have entered the ring. Seconds out, and **come out fighting**.



INFORMATION

FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Konami
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Beat-'em-up
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	No
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block

You have to admire Konami's nerve. Namco's *Tekken* series has ruled the beat-'em-up world since shortly after the PlayStation was launched, and the sensation surrounding the launch of *Tekken 3* has only just subsided. So Konami have chosen this moment to launch their challenge for the title. Their offering is *Kensei: Sacred Fist*. So is it in with a chance, or will it be knocked out in the first round?

At first glance, it would be easy to mistake this game for any one of a number of its rivals, such as *Dead or Alive*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, and *Tekken 2*. It obviously lacks the graphical polish

THE CHARACTERS ARE VARIED, INCLUDING THE OBLIGATORY JAPANESE SCHOOLGIRL, A BUSTY BLONDE, A WHITE-FACED, SPIKY-HAIRED GOTH, AND A SHARP-DRESSED BRUISER WITH A PASSING RESEMBLANCE TO STEVEN SEGAL

of *Tekken 3*, but it certainly looks a lot better than any of the *Street Fighter* games. The character models are less complex than those in *Tekken 3*, and the textures and shading are also less detailed, again resembling *Dead or Alive* and *Virtua Fighter 2*. This resemblance carries over to the backgrounds. They are rendered in 3D, but are not as detailed as those appearing in some of the competition. In theory, this lack of graphical decoration should enable the game to run very

quickly, but the review copy we have in the office seemed a bit sluggish. To be fair, this may be because it is a pre-release version – the finished product may be optimised to run faster.

Choose your weapon

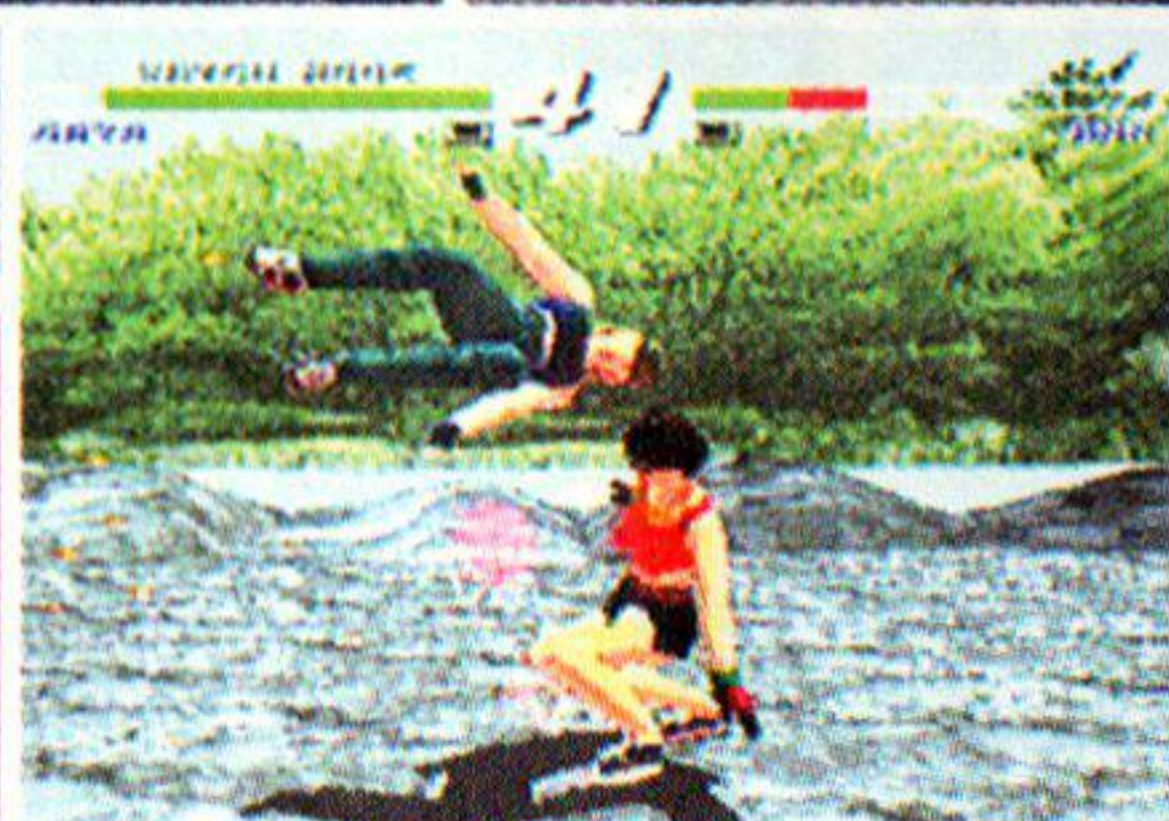
When you get down to it, though, this game has it where it counts. There are 22 characters in all, nine of which are in the starting line-up, with the other thirteen waiting in the wings for you to complete the game. The starting characters are a varied bunch, including the obligatory Japanese schoolgirl, a busty blonde, a white-faced, spiky-haired goth,

and a sharp-dressed bruiser with a passing resemblance to Steven Segal. The range of moves on offer is also wider than most, and each character has a distinct style of their own. The control method is similar to *Virtua Fighter*, with buttons for punch, kick, grapple and defend. Combination moves are fairly easy to pull off and do look very good. Most combo moves are triggered by hitting patterns on the four control buttons rather than the bizarre manipulations of the D-pad

BEATING THE ODDS

Beat-'em-ups have been one of the most popular console game genres almost since consoles began, but they have never really taken off on the PC. There have been a couple of conversions such as *Fighting Force*, *Last Bronx* and *Street Fighter Alpha*, but generally speaking, the slower control interfaces found on most PCs mean that games which rely on fast reflexes are sluggish, making them frustrating and difficult to play.

Consoles avoid this problem by using much faster dedicated control circuitry and software. Developers can take advantage of these features so your favourite fighting games are quick and responsive.



Stamping on heads and juggling opponents can be satisfying

found in the *Tekken* games. Given the size and clumsiness of my thumbs in relation to a standard Sony controller, I found this method much easier to get on with. The shoulder buttons can be configured with pre-set combinations of up to three buttons, but they are not normally necessary.

A la mode

The competition modes are familiar from other games in the genre, with training mode, versus battle, survival, and time attack. There is also a 'watch' mode, where you pick two characters and then watch them beat each other up. There doesn't seem to be much point in this, as there is no indication as to how you duplicate the impressive moves you are watching. I suppose you could pretend you were playing one of the characters so as to impress the ignorant, but you aren't that sad – are you?

It would have been nice to see greater variety in the choice of modes, something original and different. Namco tried to do

The range of moves available to each character is impressive, and combos are easy to deliver

this with the Tekken Force mode in *Tekken 3*, and although it didn't succeed brilliantly, at least they tried. *Kensei* gives the impression of being made just to prove a point, that Konami could make a beat-'em-up just as good as their competitors, but not any better. The result is a game which it is easy to sit and play for an hour or so, but without the sense of achievement you get from defeating *Tekken 3*.

You have probably formed the impression by now – or at least I hope you have – that *Kensei: Sacred Fist* is more than a little bit derivative. Its combination of game elements have all been seen before in other games. It's being launched in direct competition to the *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter* series and sits between them, combining parts of both. Characters, controls, backgrounds, game modes – all are derived from the games with which it is competing. In order for Konami to have really made an impression, the game should have had some unique selling point of its own – maybe multi-level arenas, or missile weapons, or magic, or a story-based format – but then it would be Squaresoft's *Ehrgeiz* – God Bless The Ring... Oh well.

Kensei isn't a bad game – it plays well and looks good – it's just that it doesn't offer anything original or expand its genre in any way. If Konami learn from this experience and produce a sequel some time soon, then it may be worth getting. But this one doesn't really do it. **Cliff**

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Konami have never released a PC game to date, and I can't see this one being the first.

N64 ● ○ ○ ○ ○

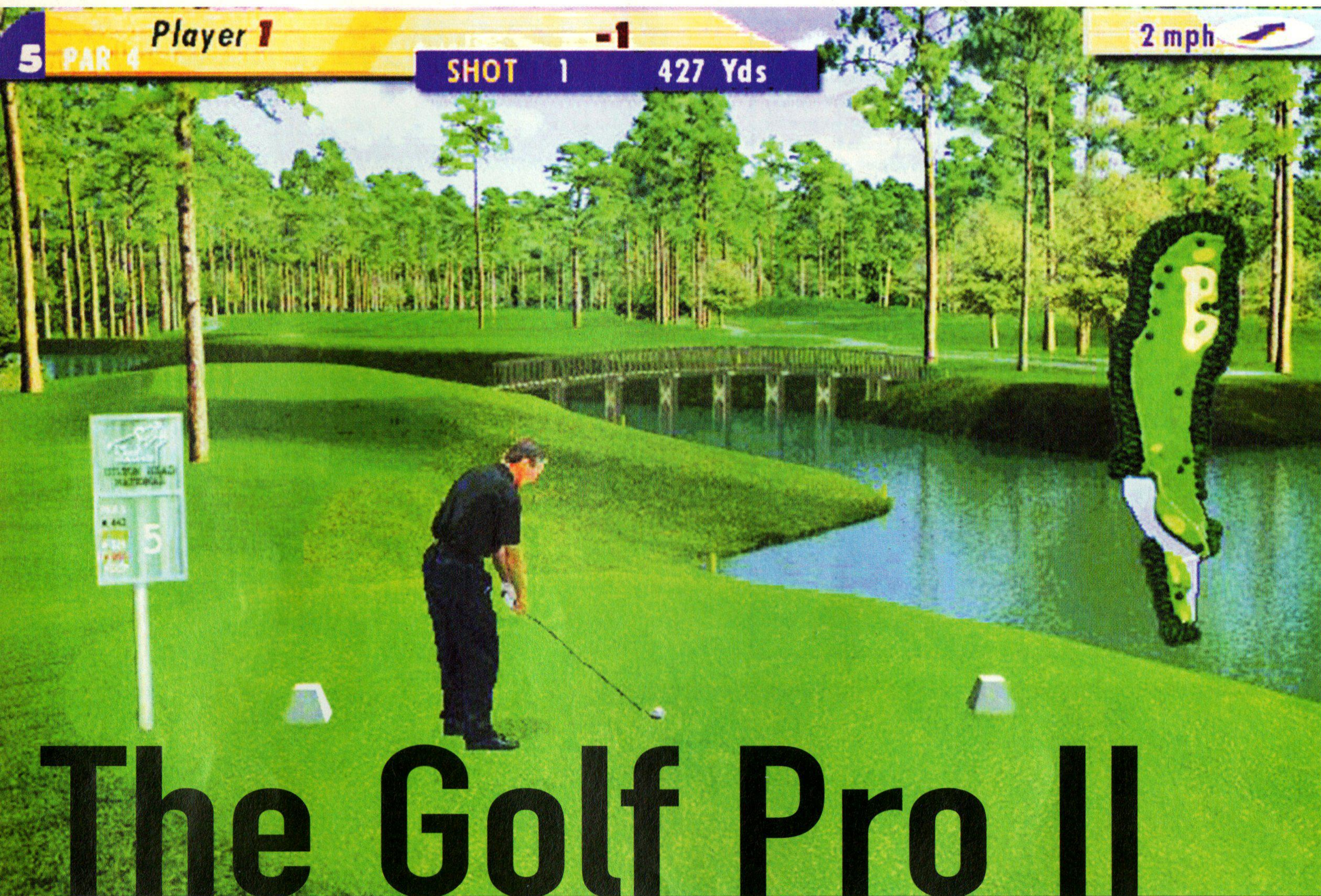
A slight chance perhaps, but unlikely. This is not the sort of game that the Nintendo is known for.

Dreamcast ● ○ ○ ○ ○

With *Virtua Fighter 3tb* already released, *Kensei* would be hard-pressed to compete, but any possible sequel could well end up on the Sega machine.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Kensei: Sacred Fist
GRAPHICS	66
SOUND	63
PLAYABILITY	75
OVERALL	70
Out of 100	



The Golf Pro II

Empire are introducing quality **new software at pocket money prices** with ***Pinball Big Race USA***, and now this sequel to the popular ***Golf Pro***, on offer for just £14.99. **A big round of applause is in order**, methinks!

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Empire
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Golf Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£14.99
PLAYERS	1-4
PROCESSOR	P90 P133
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	40MB 270MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Not Supported

WAY OF THE TIGER

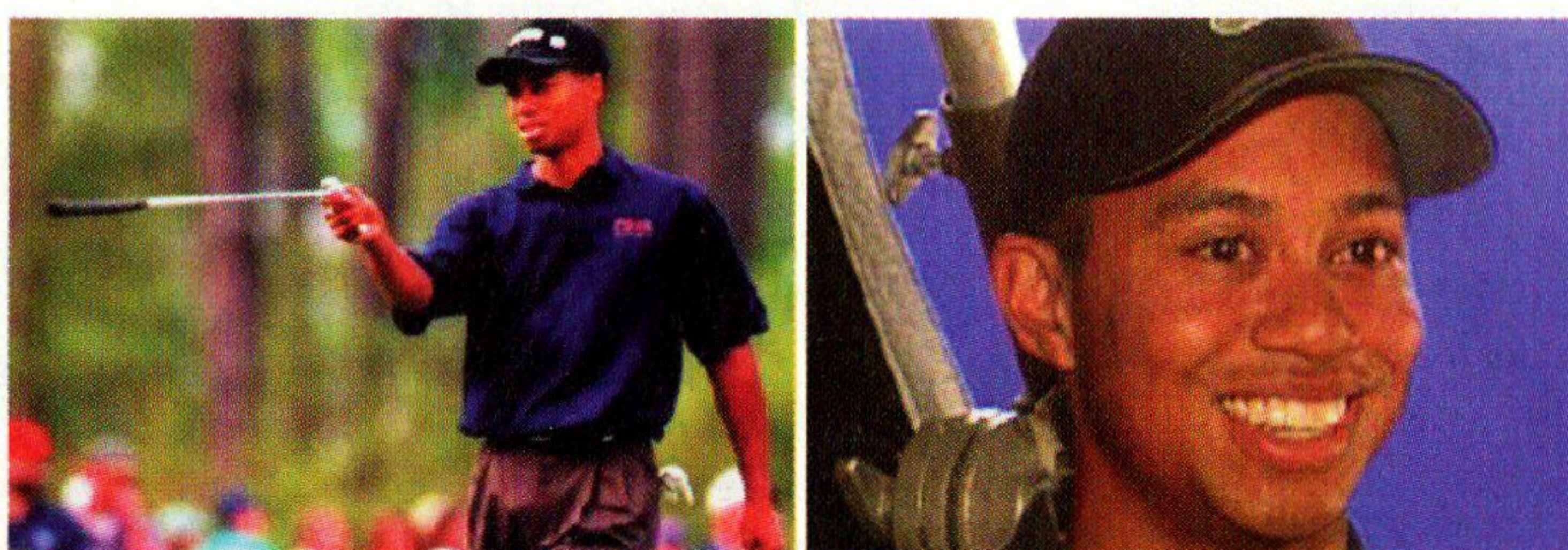
Tiger Woods may, with a little help from the marketing monster that is Nike, have become established as the most prominent and richest golfer in the history of the game. Also with a little help from that monster of the video games industry, EA, he's become the figurehead for the most famous golfing franchise around. However, with its low price-point and original control system, *The Golf Pro II* is worthy of a place in your collection, either instead or even beside its more illustrious rival.

Golf games have always been hugely popular ever since the likes of *Leaderboard* first graced the Spectrum over a decade ago. Then came the *PGA* series, which became the yardstick when the seminal Mega Drive version of *PGA European Tour* came out, instantly setting the standard. Since then many fine titles have appeared, and all have been decent sellers. The appeal of golf sims is hard to put your finger on. Perhaps it's because the sport is so relaxing that the games are so appealing. It makes such a nice change from the frantic nature of most games, especially multiplayer games. By contrast, golf is a leisurely stroll, accompanied by chirruping bird samples and the odd gusty wind noise. Also, unlike football, golf isn't a game you can just go outside and play for real. It's not much fun in the wet (which is a bit of a

drawback if you live in England), and membership of a half-decent club costs major wonga – and even then you've gotta be prepared to go on a waiting list for two years. Okay, maybe that's a slight exaggeration, but you know what I mean.

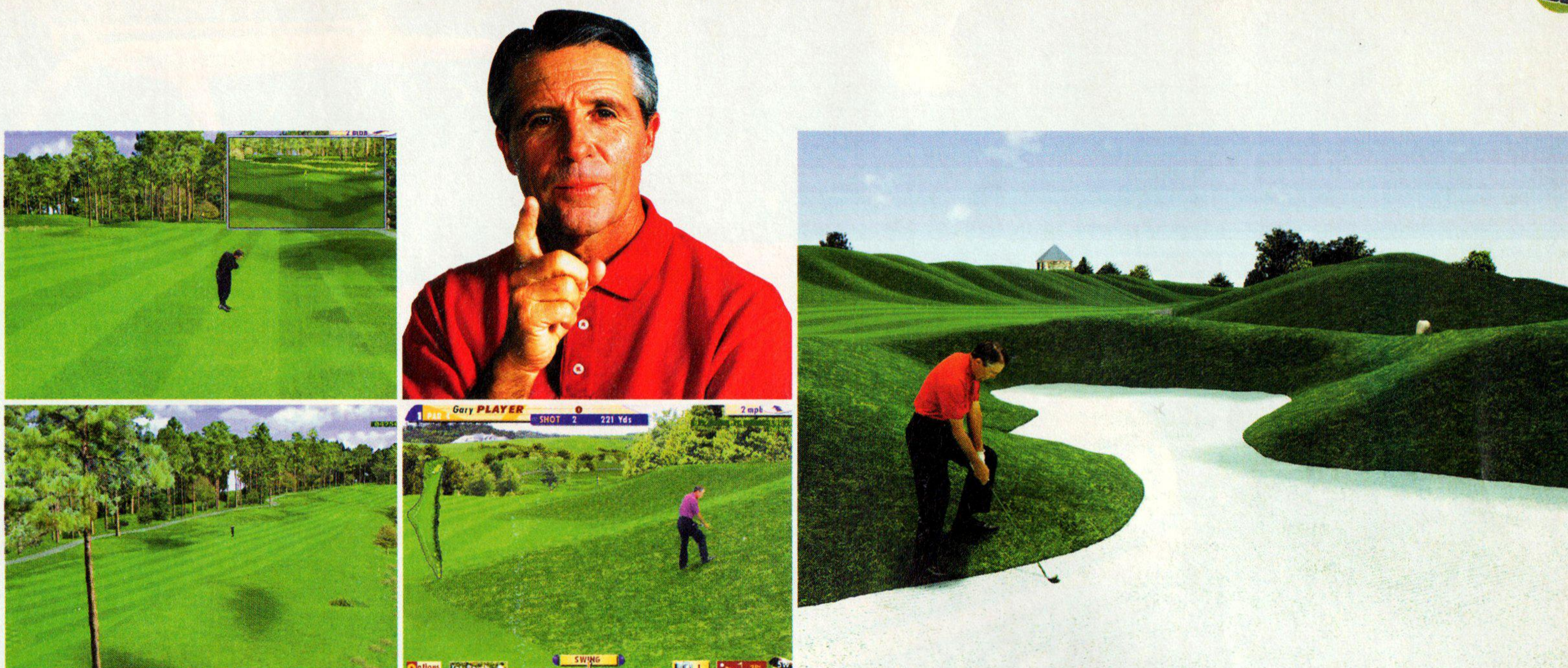
Rough

With all the golf sims currently available, the main problem facing any new game is to break into the market in the first place. EA have revamped the *PGA* series with the signing of Tiger Woods, Microprose's golf games have always been well-received, and Eidos' *Links LS 99* has just been launched as well. *The Golf Pro* already has a confirmed army of fans out there,



TAKING CONTROL

The tutorial takes you through the basics of the mouse swing nicely, gently easing away any misgivings you might have. Putting can, however, prove a rather tricky business over the first few holes until you get the hang of it.



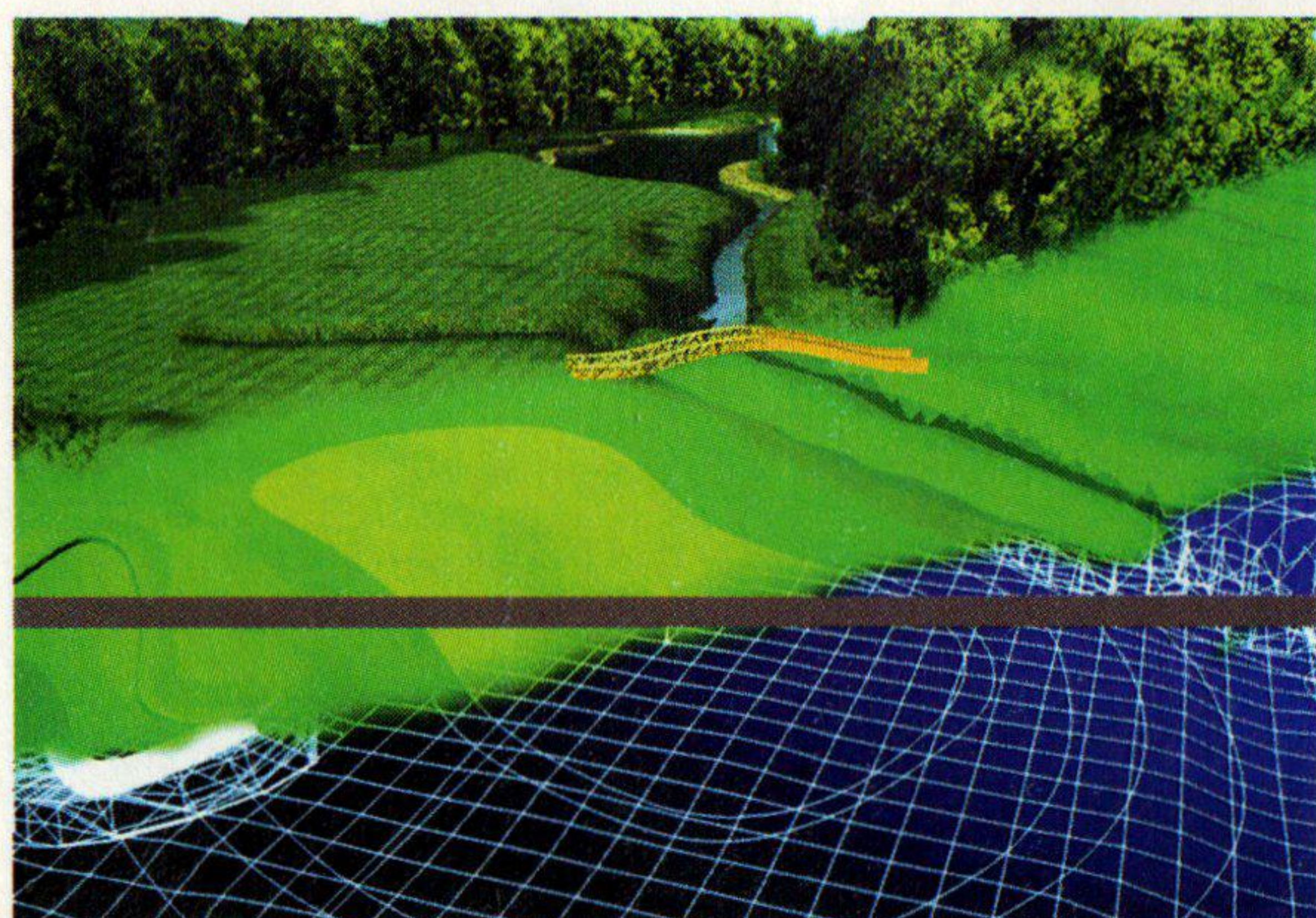
however, after the original introduced its revolutionary 'mouse swing' shot technique. In a genre that was in danger of becoming totally stagnant, Empire completely revamped the control system, getting away from the tried and trusted system of clicking a moving powerbar at the right moment to determine shot strength and accuracy. Instead *The Golf Pro* required the player to move the mouse as if it were the club by sliding it along the mouse mat to simulate a swing. This system is reprised in the sequel and is just as smooth and effective as before. A fluid and steady swing is vital, and though speed will increase power, it's more important that the stroke be smooth, just like the real thing. A perfect shot involves keeping the mouse movement totally horizontal. Deviation up or down will result in a hook or slice respectively.

This time the featured course is Wentworth. Though the graphics are very nice, I can't for the life of me figure out why they need put it on two CDs. You've gotta swap 'em over after the front nine holes in order to play the back nine. Still, there you go.

Once again they've got Mr Gary Player on board to provide tips on technique, as well as a stern challenge against which players

THE INCREASED NUMBER OF PLAY MODES ARE PROBABLY THE MAIN IMPROVEMENT OVER THE ORIGINAL, AND SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE LONGEVITY

can test themselves when they think they're up to it. There's a nice tutorial section at the start where Gary takes you through the nuances of the mouse swing step by step, then you can head out



onto the course to play in your choice of competition modes, including a full tournament or a simple practice round. The increased number of play modes are probably the main improvement over the original, and substantially increase longevity.

Hole

As mentioned earlier, *The Golf Pro II*'s main competition consists of *Tiger Woods 99*, *Links LS 99* and *Microsoft Golf 98*. The Microsoft game is looking pretty dated now, and its simplistic gameplay is perhaps a little too shallow to make it seriously compelling. *Links LS*

99, by contrast, goes the other way and tries to be the most in-depth golf simulation to date. In this it succeeds, but this also contributes to its downfall. It can be so frustrating at times, which is the complete antithesis of what made golf games so popular in the first place. Of the three, *Tiger Woods* is easily the most playable with decent graphics and playability which can be tailored to suit the player. However, at more than twice the price (nearly four times the price if you fork out for the simultaneously released course disk as well), it's quite clear which is friendlier on the pocket!

At £14.99 this is a complete steal. Okay, so it only has one course, but that's still 18 holes and, at the end of the day, that's plenty to keep most people going for a while. The mouse swing always makes people go 'um, well...' when they first hear about it, but it actually works very well indeed, although it does demand a decent mouse or you can forget about it. The only real omission is the lack of an alternative. Including the traditional clicking method as an option would have made the game more instantly accessible to those unfamiliar with the first *Golf Pro* game. If this was thirty quid you'd be forgiven for thinking one course was rather tight. No complaints on the gameplay front, however, but at this price it you must buy it. It's as simple as that! **Miles**

Sadly there's no bucket and spade option for players not yet skilled with the mouse swing

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ●○○○○

Very unlikely. We've heard nothing to suggest this will appear on Sony's grey box and, to be honest, with the pricing system of PSX games, it would struggle against *Tiger Woods*.

N64 ○○○○○

If a PlayStation version is highly unlikely, this is of doubtful proportions so tall you'd have to stick a red flashing light on top of it as a warning to low-flying aircraft.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	The Golf Pro II
GRAPHICS	84
SOUND	80
PLAYABILITY	87
OVERALL	84
Out of 100	



Max Power Racing

You don't **need to look hard** to find a decent racing game on the PlayStation. **Will max power be enough** for Infogrames' latest?

TAKING CONTROL

It's hard to find a racing game that you can pick up and play straight away, but the control system here is one of the easiest to get to grips with. It's still obvious from your early races, though, that this will take you a while to master. First impressions were very good indeed.

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER	Infogrames
DEVELOPER	Eutechnyx
STYLE	Arcade Racing
RELEASE	February
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	Yes
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block

In the wake of *Gran Turismo*, few games have managed to ride the PlayStation's racing genre to a degree that effectively challenges that title. Only the excellent *TOCA 2* comes to mind, but then it was vastly different in style to the current racing champion. *Max Power Racing* has been perhaps the most ominous pretender to *GT*'s crown.

Firstly, *Max Power Racing* is not a game that will be remembered for as long as *GT*. There are no new features that particularly stand out as being innovative or original, and the game as a whole contains almost exactly what you might expect from your average racer. But, fortunately, this is about as bad as the game ever gets.

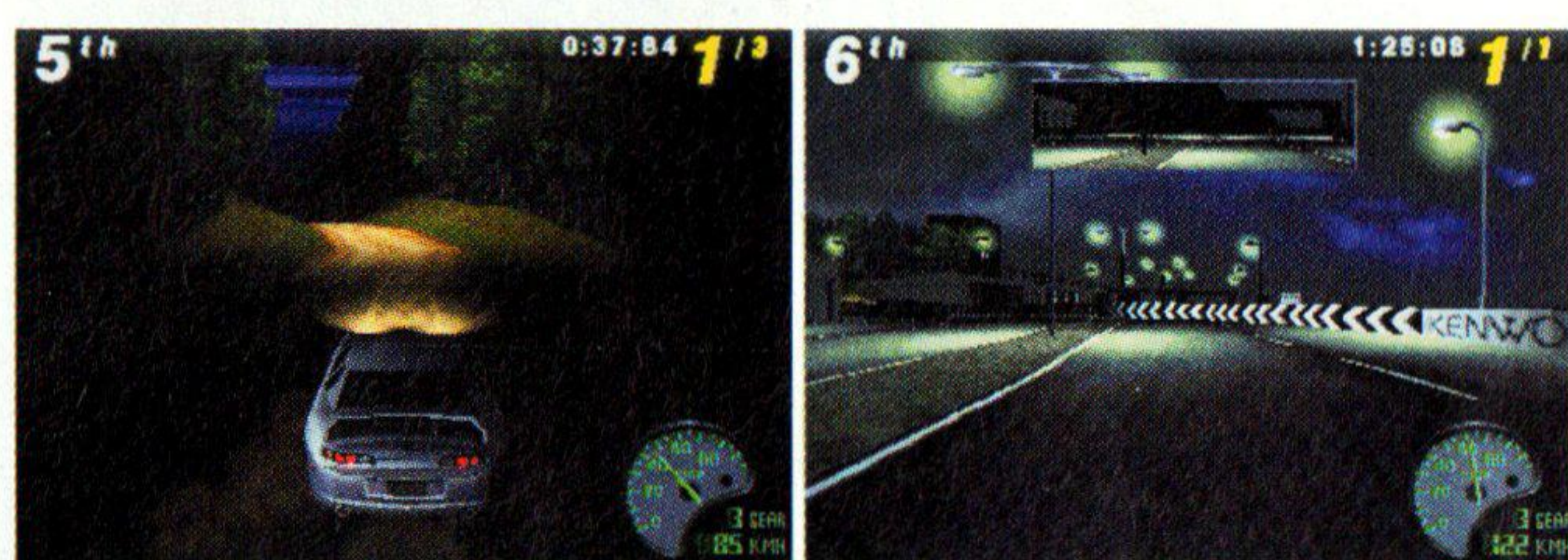
Course power

The championship mode has been split completely into four separate tournaments. You can race in either an amateur or professional GTi or performance championship, working your way through from the easiest and unlocking the next as it is completed. Starting off in Amateur GTi, you'll race a series of tracks against five other CPU opponents. The cars you begin the game with leave a lot to be desired, but you need not win the entire championship to unlock more. Being successful on some courses can grace you with new vehicles, and with these it becomes easier to unlock the rest and eventually complete your current championship. This learning curve is better than most, as the easier courses in each championship can be completed with the lowest performance cars,



TURN ME UP

As well as taking its name from the popular magazine, there are several features of the game that put across the passion that has been used in its making. Before each track you may access one of the most detailed car tune screens seen in an arcade racing game. Every option and sliding bar will also have an untold effect on another, so you shouldn't attempt to increase your aerodynamics without expecting significant changes in handling.



and the rest become easier as your selection of vehicles increases.

Thanks to the licensing, each car is an accurate replica of the real thing. Many of the actual manufacturers have been involved in the game's development to make it as accurate as possible, and it does show (to a certain extent). The flip side of the coin is that the developers have not been able to include realistic damage on the cars – you'll have to make do with only the occasional shattered windscreen.

Rev your engines

The game engine is the all-important factor in any racer, and *Max Power's* is one of the better ones. A lot of criticism has been dealt out to racing games that can be finished by holding down the accelerator throughout the game, but arcade racers should definitely avoid the opposite effect of over-complicated control. *Max Power Racing* allows you to use whichever mode you prefer,

STRAY SLIGHTLY OFF-COURSE AND YOU WILL ONLY NOTICE A CHANGE IN YOUR ACCELERATION. BECAUSE OF THIS, OVERTAKING IN THIS WAY CAN BE VERY EFFECTIVE

and sharp, high speed cornering can often send you into a power slide, which can often be a very good thing, though you have to be a very skilled driver to avoid overturning and losing your speed.

The importance of acceleration is sometimes much greater than speed. Your car will have a much faster top speed than the others, but only if you have the chance to reach it (which will



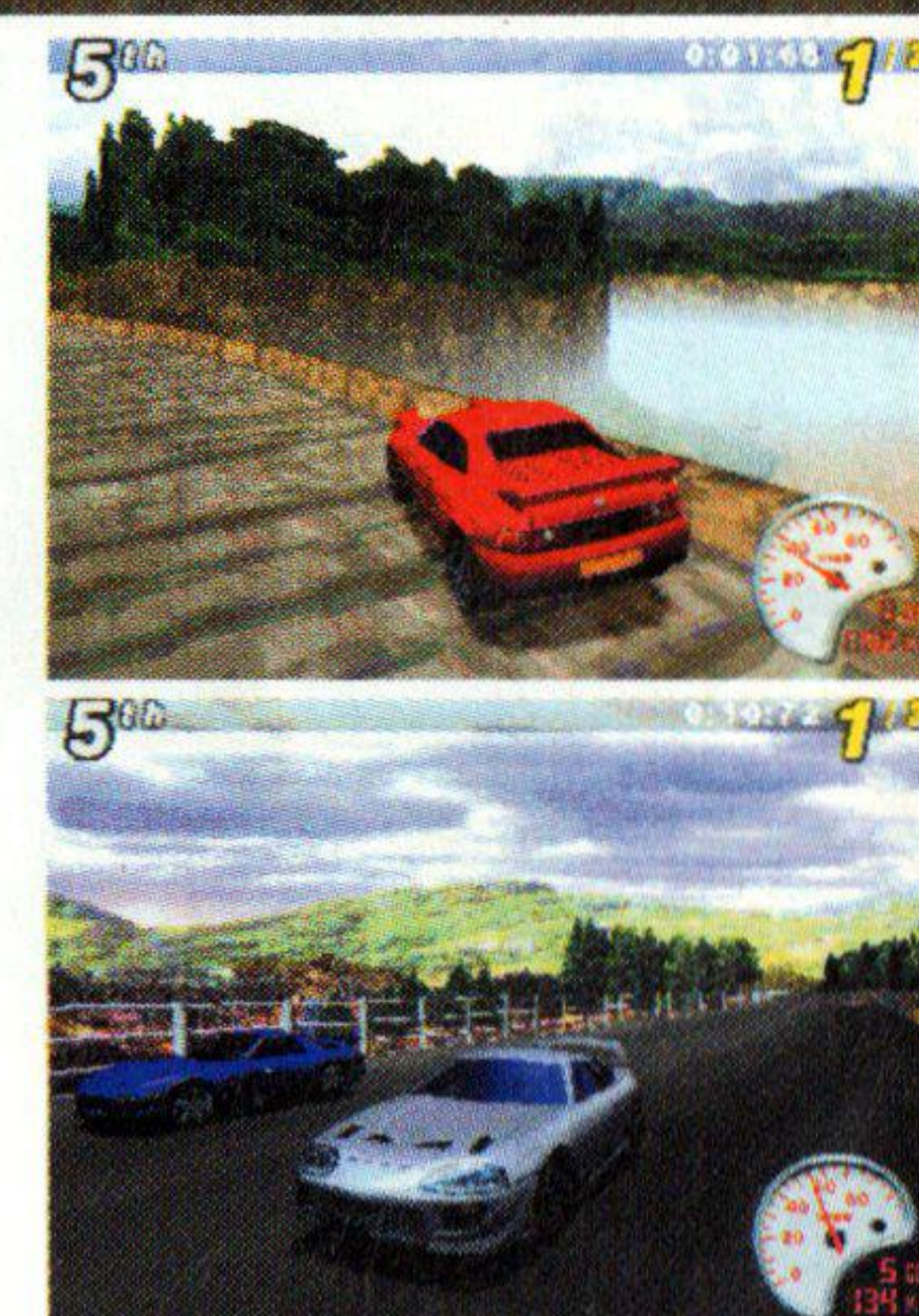
take a long time). If you can get in a good run of perfect cornering, you'll find yourself near the front of the race in no time. On the other hand, overturning a corner can dramatically slow you down. In many other games, running off the main track onto the grass verge will slow you right down, but here the effect is often variable, depending on how far off you go. Stray slightly off-course and you will only notice a change in your acceleration. Because of this, overtaking in this way can be very effective if you are already travelling at a high speed. Another good feature is the removal of the far too common 'invisible wall'; your car can travel anywhere there is grass, which gives rise to a variety of shortcuts that can be uncovered.

Graphically this is pretty much on a par with *Gran Turismo*, which is about as good as it gets at the moment. The lighting is very nice, with two headlight settings for the night-time tracks (though they are still very dark) and some very attractive courses.

Despite the proposed 30 tracks, many of them are very similar to each other and are only

distinguishable by the different weather conditions, which is a shame. The techno/dance soundtrack is also very impressive and suits the game extremely well.

Max Power Racing falls a fair way short of *Gran Turismo*, but it is perhaps the better of all the recent attempts in the genre. Bear this in mind and it shouldn't disappoint. **Will**



Max Power Racing achieves a credible position just behind *GT* and *R4*

OTHER FORMATS?

N64 ○○○○○

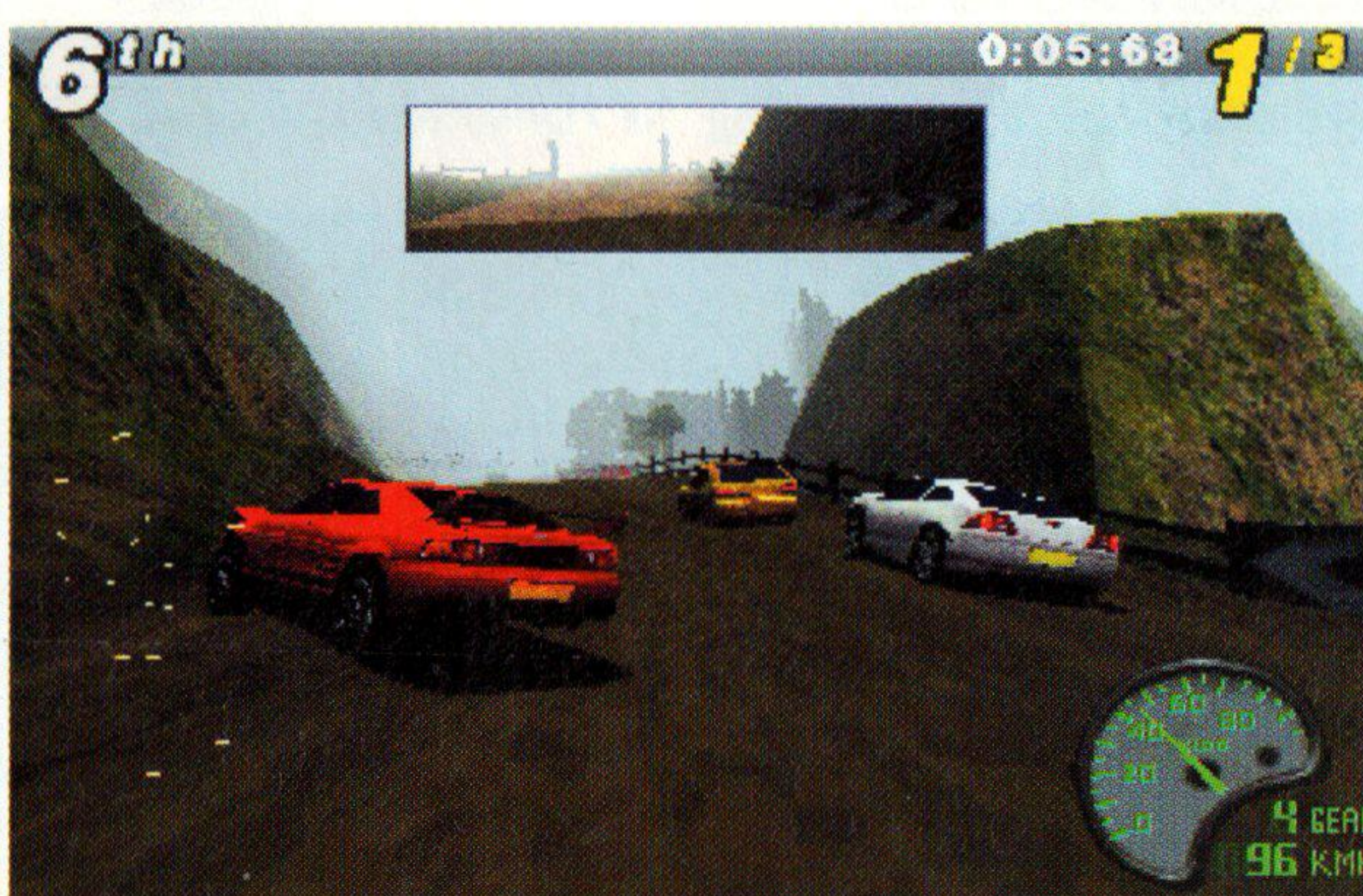
Of course it could potentially be done, but it's highly unlikely that Infogrames will consider it a worthwhile move.

PC ●○○○○

Despite the big market, there are no official plans for a conversion, and we won't be expecting any in the foreseeable future.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Max Power Racing
GRAPHICS	87
SOUND	91
PLAYABILITY	83
OVERALL	84
Out of 100	





X-WING

Collector's Series

With the new **Star Wars** film just around the corner, the **hype has begun** in earnest. What better time to **re-release** some of the classic **Star Wars** games?

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Activision
DEVELOPER	LucasArts
STYLE	Flight Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£34.99
PLAYERS	One
PROCESSOR	P133 P166
MEMORY	16MB
DISK SPACE	100MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

LucasArts have done a great job of taking existing genres and stamping the Star Wars licence all over them. In the past we've had *Dark Forces* (*Doom* with Star Wars), *Jedi Knight* (*Quake* with Star Wars) and we've also got *Force Commander* to look forward to (*Command and Conquer* with Star Wars). One of the most successful licences of this sort have been the *X-Wing* games – games that are as close to flight simulations as you could get with a Star Wars licence. *X-Wing*, *Tie Fighter* and *X-Wing vs.*

Tie Fighter are all now available in one pack as a special collector's edition.

Obi-wan never told you...

The basic premise of both *X-Wing* and *Tie Fighter* is that you take the role of either a Rebel or Imperial pilot. You then have a choice of campaigns to take part in and a multitude of objective-based missions. This is the clever part of this and almost every other Star Wars licensed game – the missions take



Having access to the 'real' Star Wars models gives LucasArts' games an authentic feel to them

TAKING CONTROL

How time and technology flies. It was only four years ago that *Tie Fighter* was state of the art, and now it looks like... well, not that good. The inclusion of 3D accelerated graphics is a big bonus, however, and the gameplay remains as classic as it always was. Watch out Darth Vader, here I come!



part in recognisable areas of Star Wars space but, in effect, expand on the Star Wars universe. Any dedicated fan (geek?) will appreciate this 'filling in' of blank spaces and of seeing things from another point of view. There is one campaign in *Tie Fighter* which continues on from where the Rebels escape from Hoth – you take part in the clean up operations. Seeing the grand scheme of things from a lowly Tie Fighter's perspective is an interesting aspect of the game. This is partly why the Star Wars games have been a success.

Your missions vary from the tedious (checking cargo ships for Rebels) to the exhilarating (huge space battles). The variety on offer here is to be admired, and there is a depth to the game that often makes you believe that you are

THIS IS THE CLEVER PART OF THIS AND ALMOST EVERY OTHER STAR WARS LICENSED GAME - THE MISSIONS TAKE PART IN RECOGNISABLE AREAS OF STAR WARS SPACE AND, IN EFFECT, EXPAND ON THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE

actually taking part in one of the films – albeit from a grunt's point of view.

X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter is different from the other two purely because it sets itself up as a multiplayer game. Here you are given the opportunity to set up matches that involve up to eight players on a side, and are given a number of scenarios in which to take part in. Although the *X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter* multiplayer game is nowhere near as popular as *Quake II* and some of the other first-person on-line games, it still has quite a following on the Net.

That's no moon

The big bonus to be had with this reissue of the *X-Wing* games is that each of the games has been souped up to take advantage of 3D acceleration technology. This, of course, does little more than smoothing down the textures, but comparing the accelerated

OLD STYLE - NEW STYLE

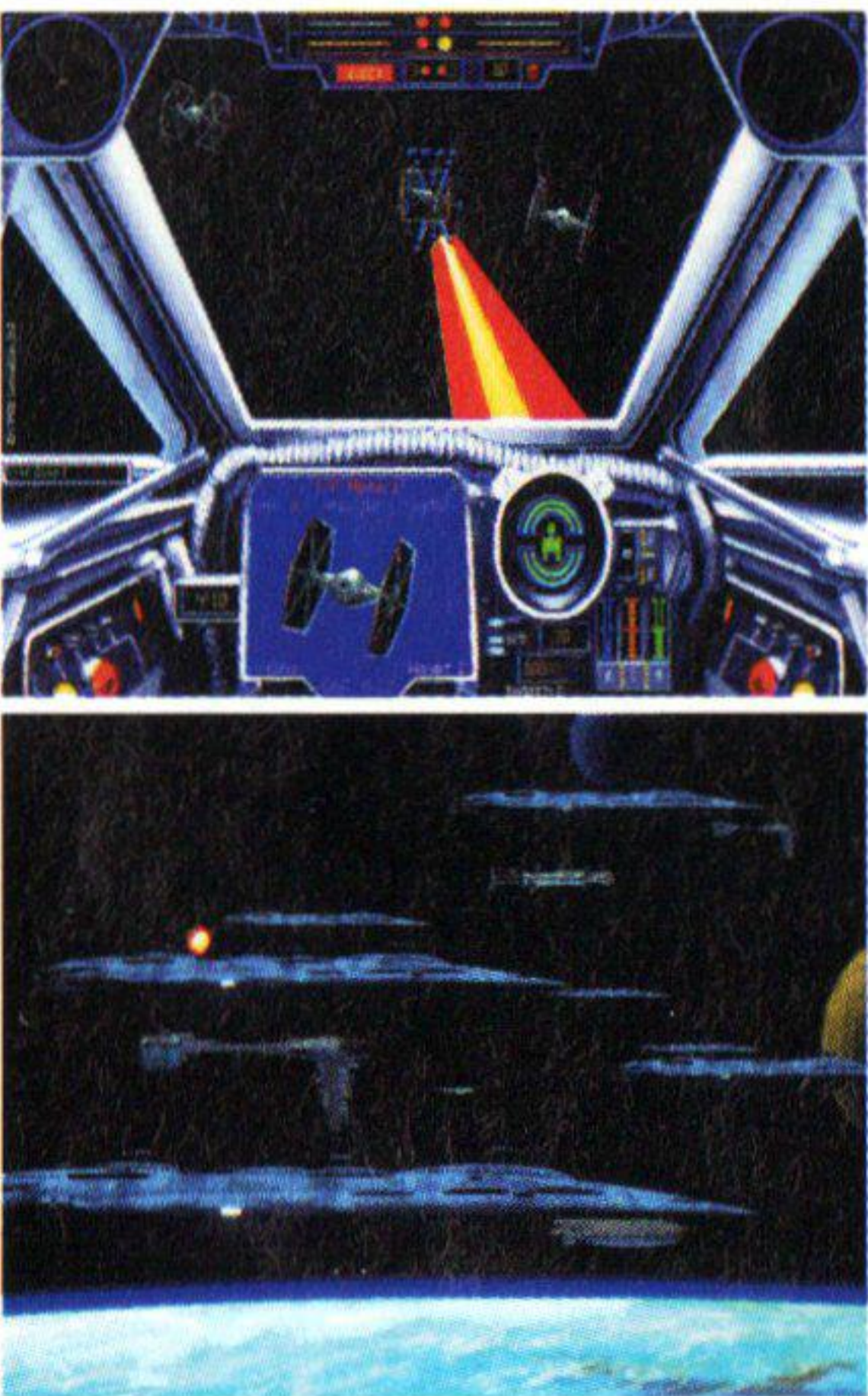
The best thing about this update of three classic games is that they now boast 3D accelerated graphics. See below for how much difference this makes...



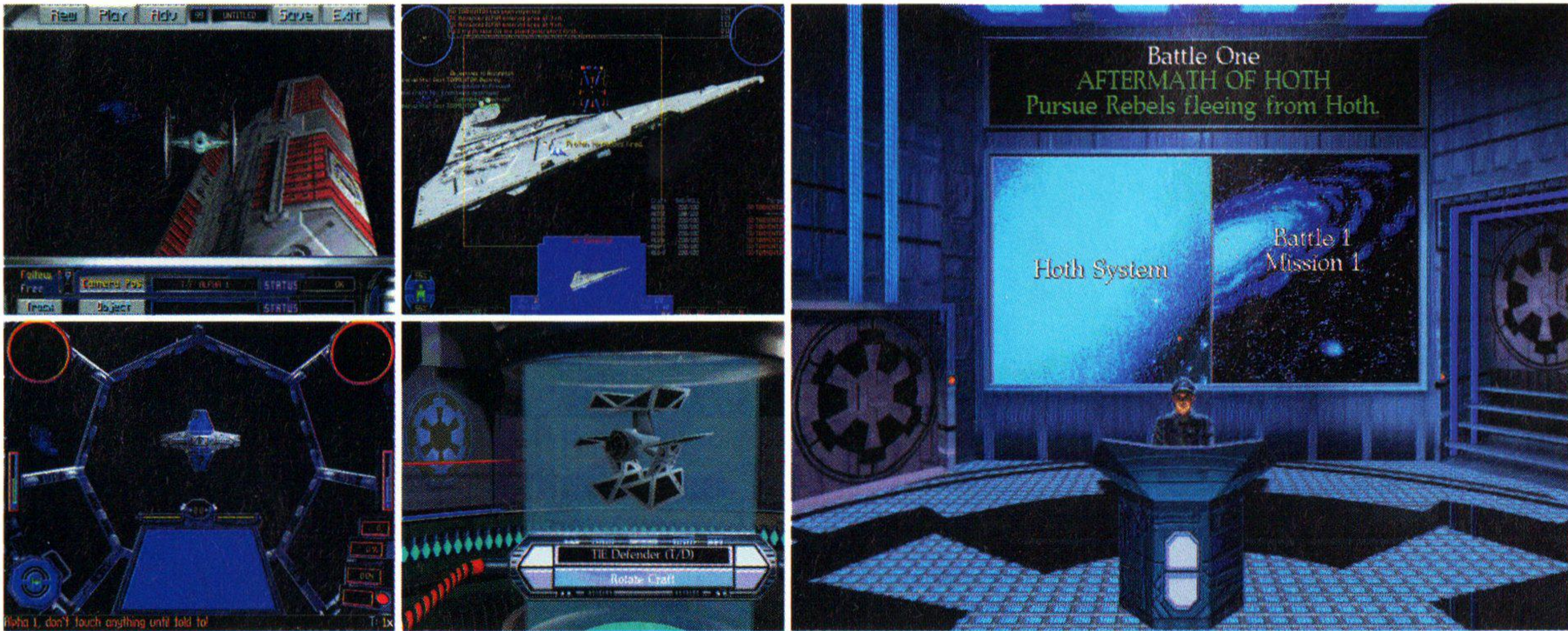
version and the software versions shows you just how much influence this technology has had over the last couple of years. While the presentation of these games harks back to good old VGA days, the graphics are a worthy update. There are better around, but how many can boast X-Wings, B-Wings and the Millennium Falcon? None. The great thing is that these games can run at a decent speed even on a relatively low-end PC (think P133).

Unfortunately the sound has not been given a reworking in the same way that the graphics have. Both *X-Wing* and *Tie Fighter* rely on midi-based music which, to be frank, is poor compared to the orchestral sounds of *X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter*. Normally this wouldn't be a problem, but with a Star Wars licence the music is as integral to the experience as the images from the films.

The *X-Wing Collector's Series* will be a welcome addition to the collection of any avid Star Wars fan, and indeed anyone interested in the flight sim genre. The game offers a chance to take part in George Lucas' universe and expands on and fills in many of the gaps in the films. It can also become extremely immersive. Be warned, though, this is no arcade shooter like *Rogue Squadron* – the missions are definitely more 'simulation' than arcade, and you should be prepared to spend a decent amount of time on each mission to complete it. This is partly why *The X-Wing Collector's Series* offers such good value for your money: 40 missions in *X-Wing*; 30 missions in *Tie Fighter*; and another fourteen training missions in *X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter*. What more could any Rebel pilot wannabe ask for? These three games are probably the closest that LucasArts have come to recreating the atmosphere and experience of the films in a video game. If you're a fan, and don't have these games already, then buy it immediately. **Nick**



Cut scenes are nothing compared to today's CG monsters. However, they still set the scene admirably



X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter is the more ambitious of the three titles graphically, and features larger and a wider variety of spacecraft

OTHER FORMATS?

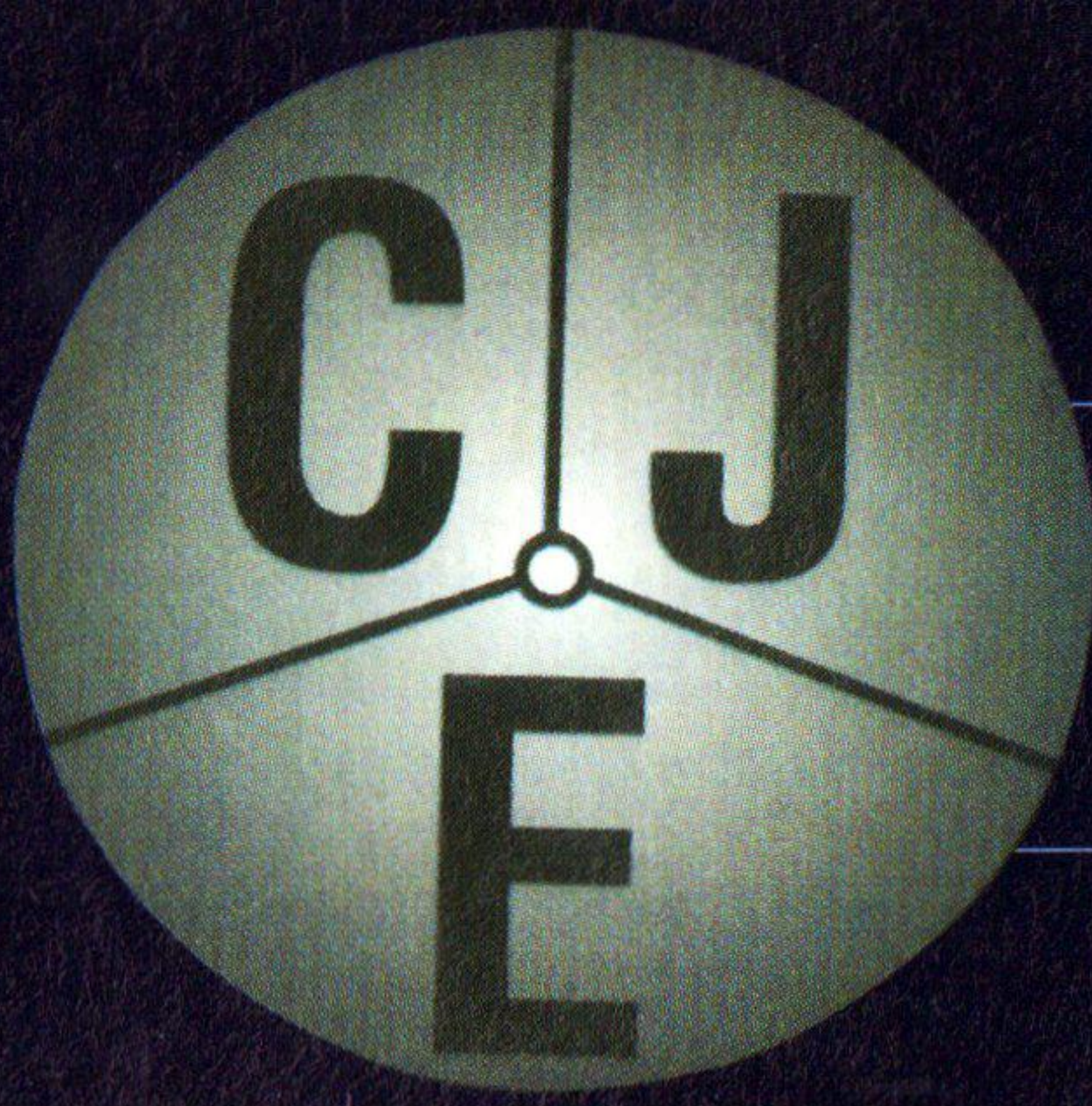
PlayStation ○○○○○
The PlayStation had a fairly bog standard conversion of *Dark Forces* but won't be seeing another Star Wars game for quite some time. It's a 'no'.

N64 ○○○○○
Any of the three titles would make an excellent game on the N64, but you should think arcade. Think *Rogue Squadron*.

Dreamcast ●○○○○
While these games are old, they're still good, and on the Dreamcast they could be even better. Alas, it is unlikely to happen.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	X-Wing Collector's Series
GRAPHICS	75
SOUND	70
PLAYABILITY	85
OVERALL	83
Out of 100	



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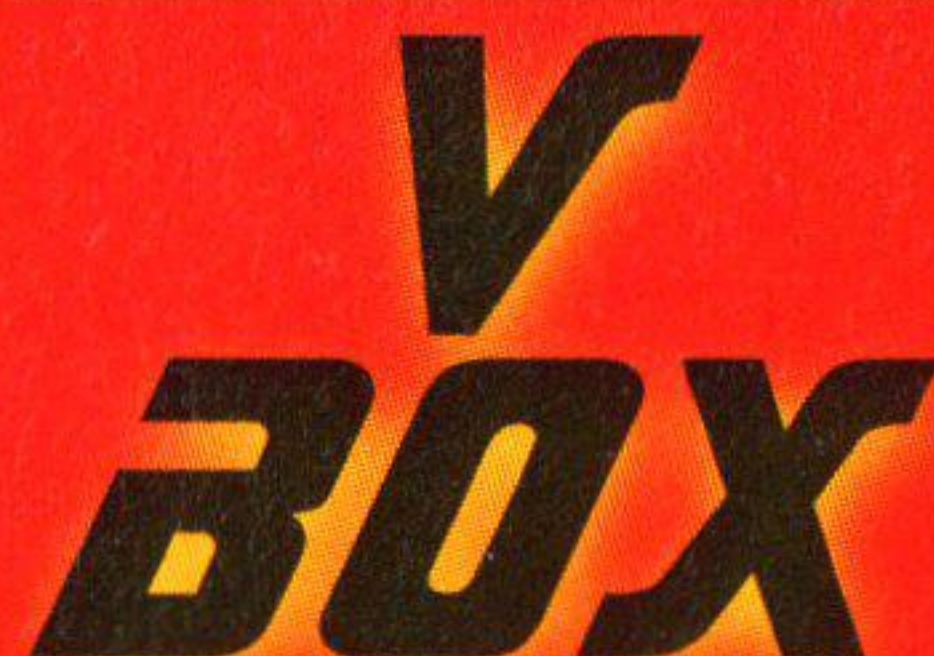
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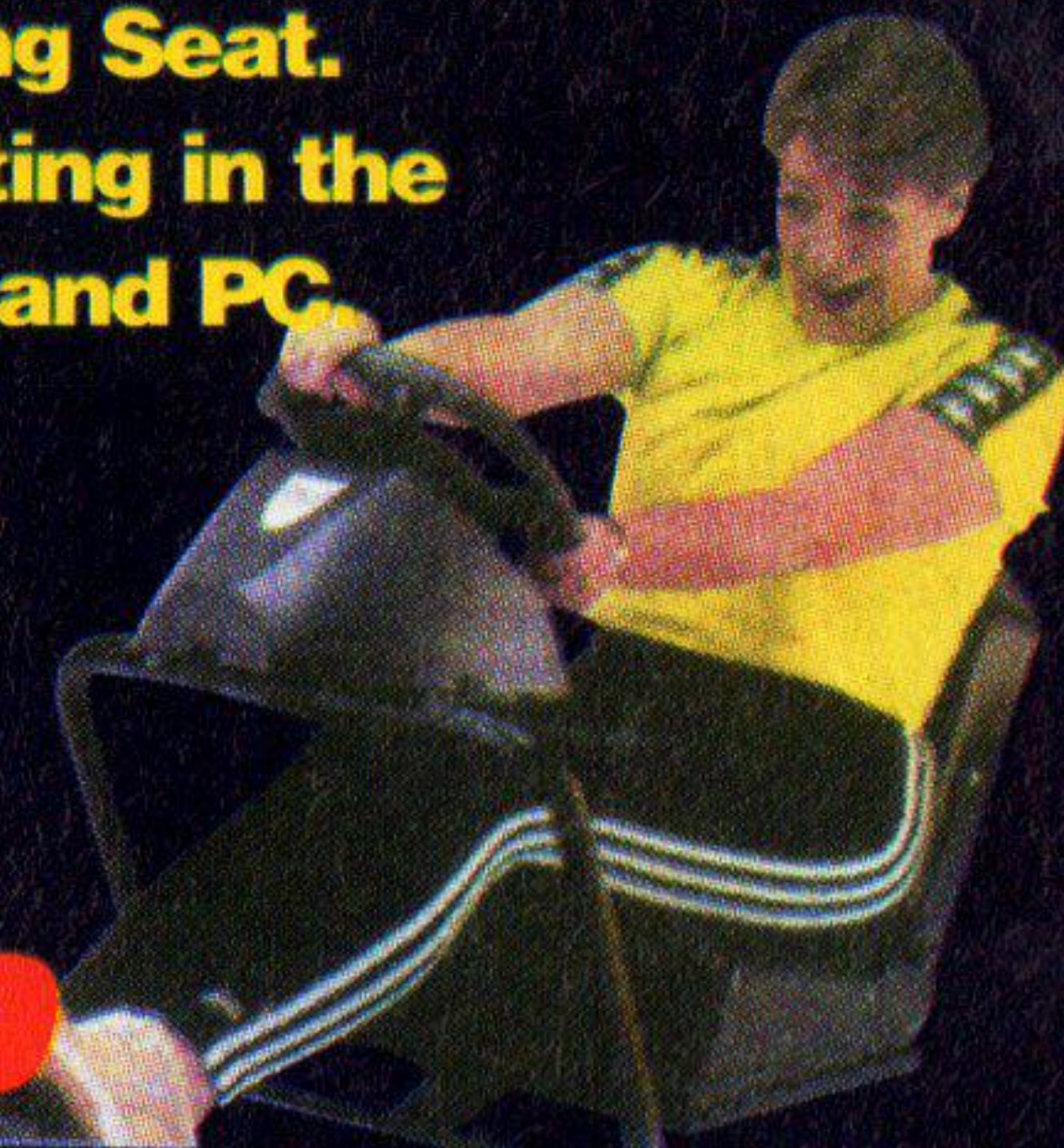
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Monkey Hero

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Take 2 Interactive** Developer: **Blam** Style: **Adventure**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£39.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

If I mentioned that *Monkey Hero* on the PlayStation shares a lot in common with the *Legend of Zelda*, then more than a few heads may be turned. But then, of course, I am talking about the SNES version: *A Link to the Past*.

As Monkey, you set out to battle the evil Nightmare King before he takes over the world. Played from a top-down 3D perspective, your quest is achieved by solving a number of puzzles as you move from room to room.

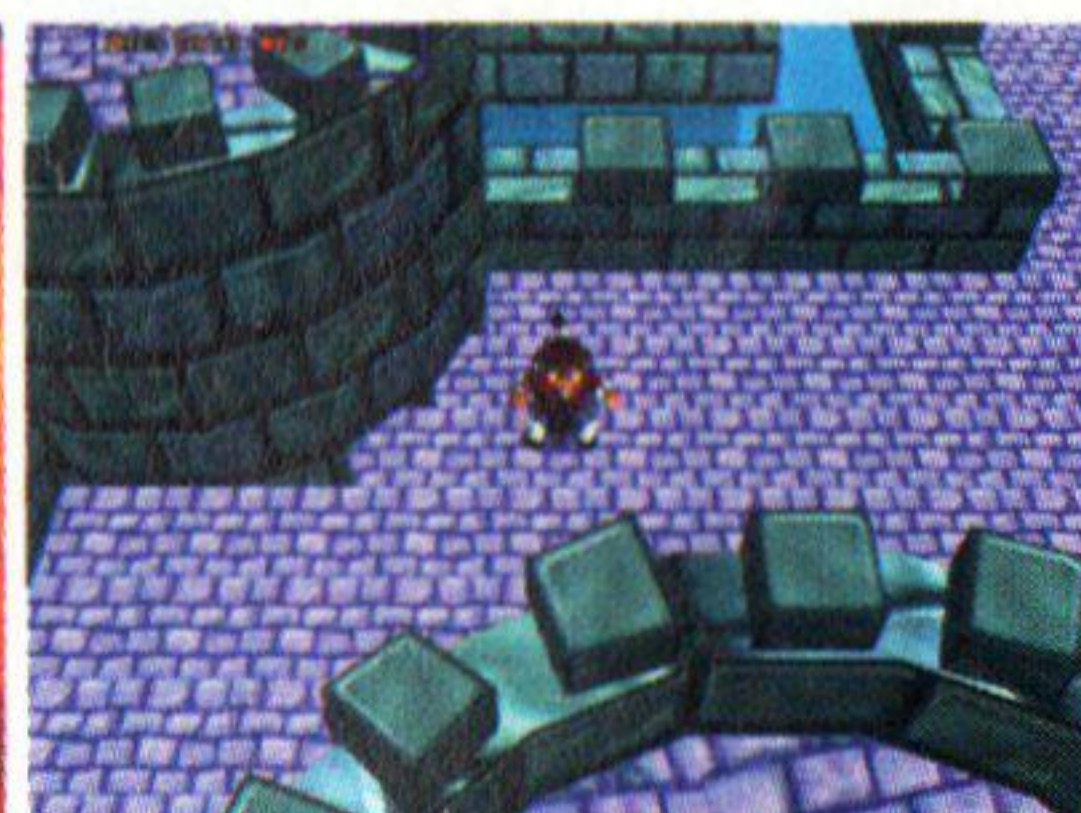
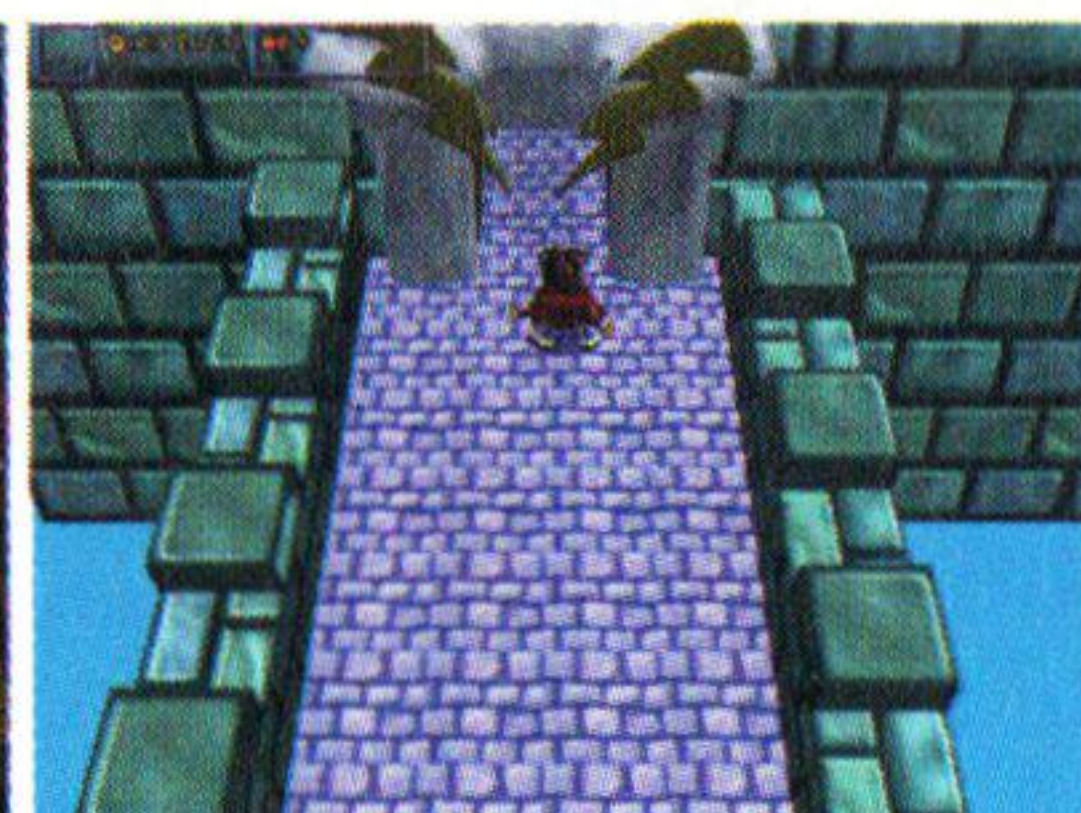
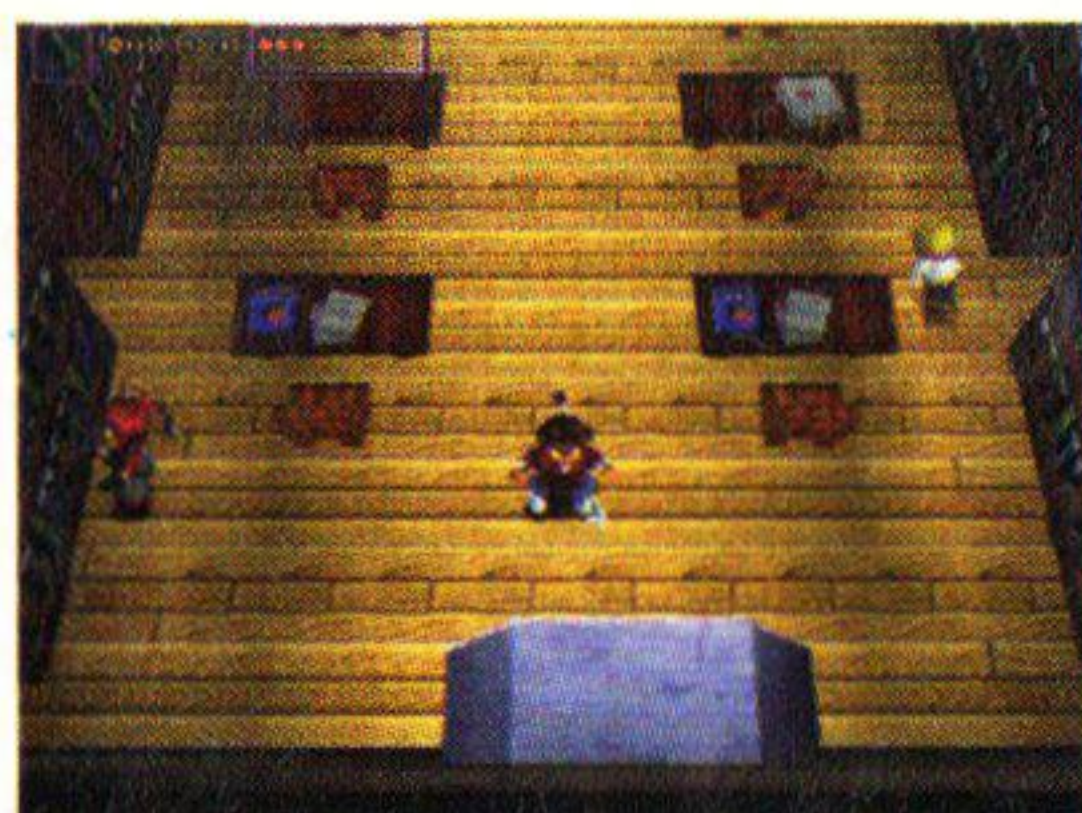
Although the game is technically 3D, to call it that may be misleading – the camera permanently looks down, and as most of the levels are flat, the

advantages of the 3D world are extremely hard to distinguish. On the whole this is not a graphically impressive game. It looks and sounds very dated indeed, but at least the gameplay is there.

It's difficult to put your finger on what makes *Monkey Hero* fun to play, but it is – for a limited time at least. There is nothing spectacular that really stands out, nor is there much to fault the game on. Basically, anyone who enjoyed the exploration and puzzle solving aspects of *A Link to the Past* will take a lot from the game, even if this isn't quite as well made as its SNES counterpart.

Will

VERDICT: 74%



Test Drive 4x4

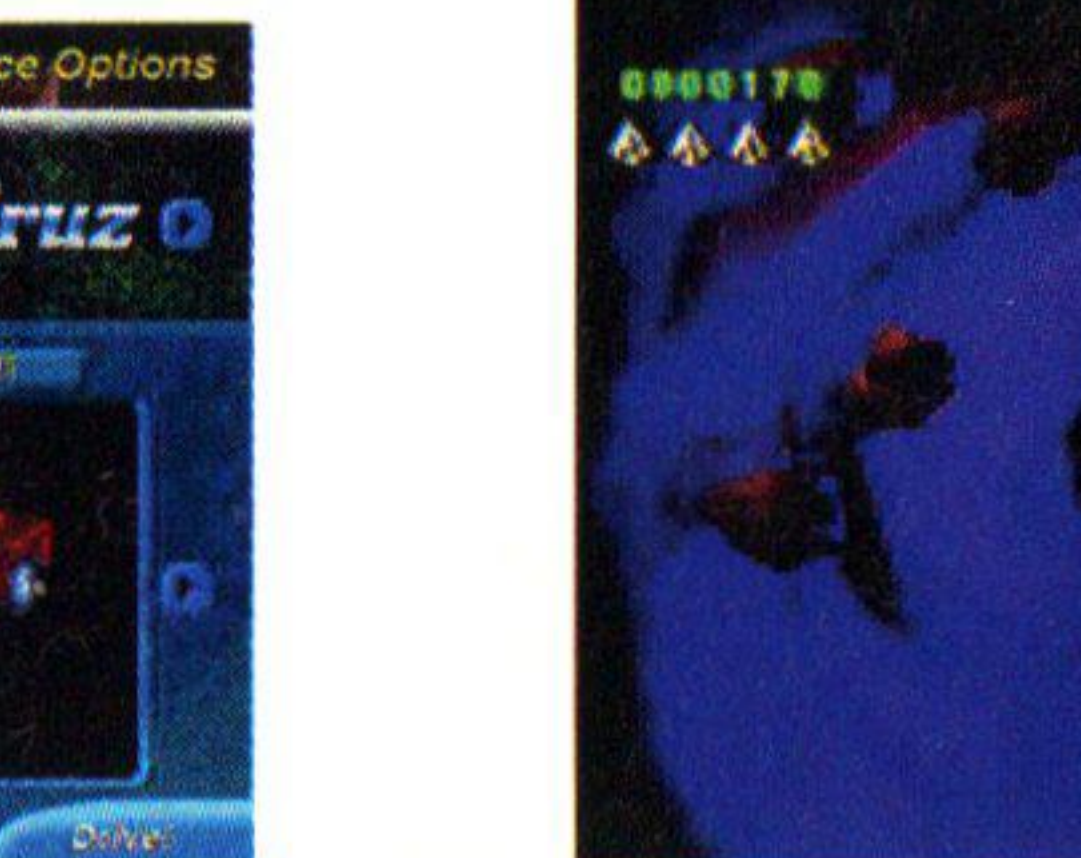
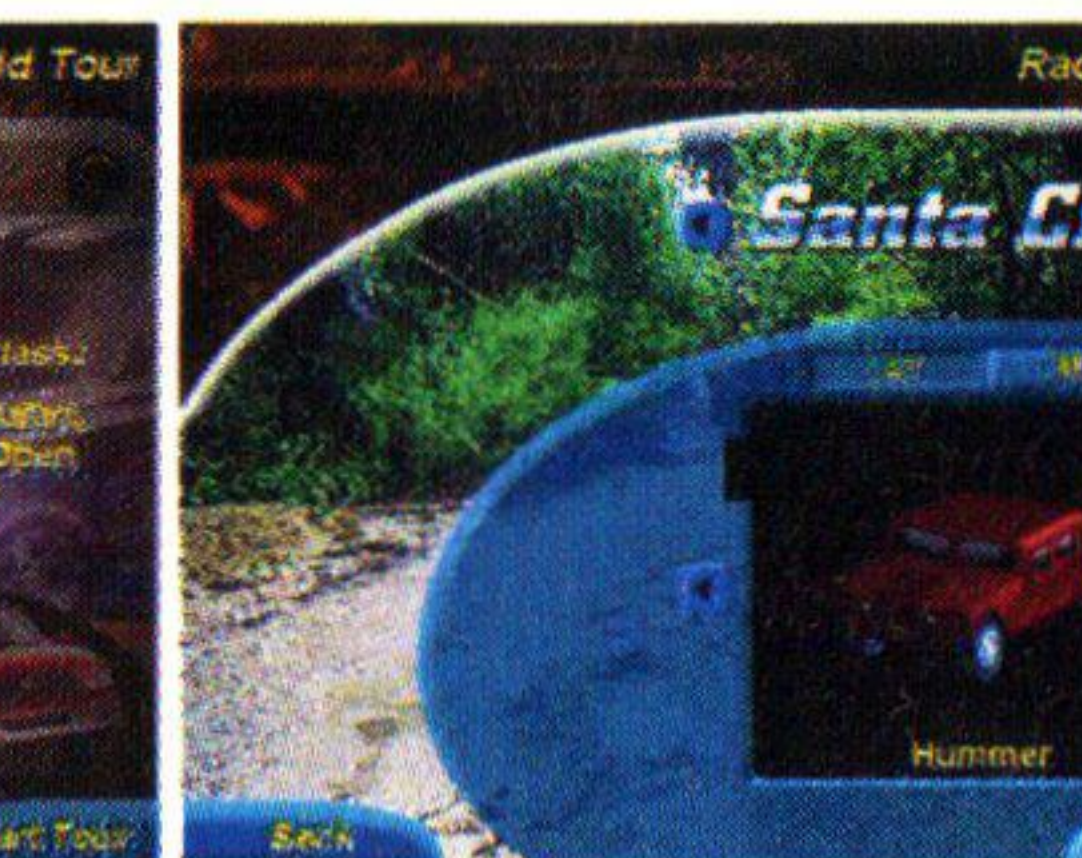
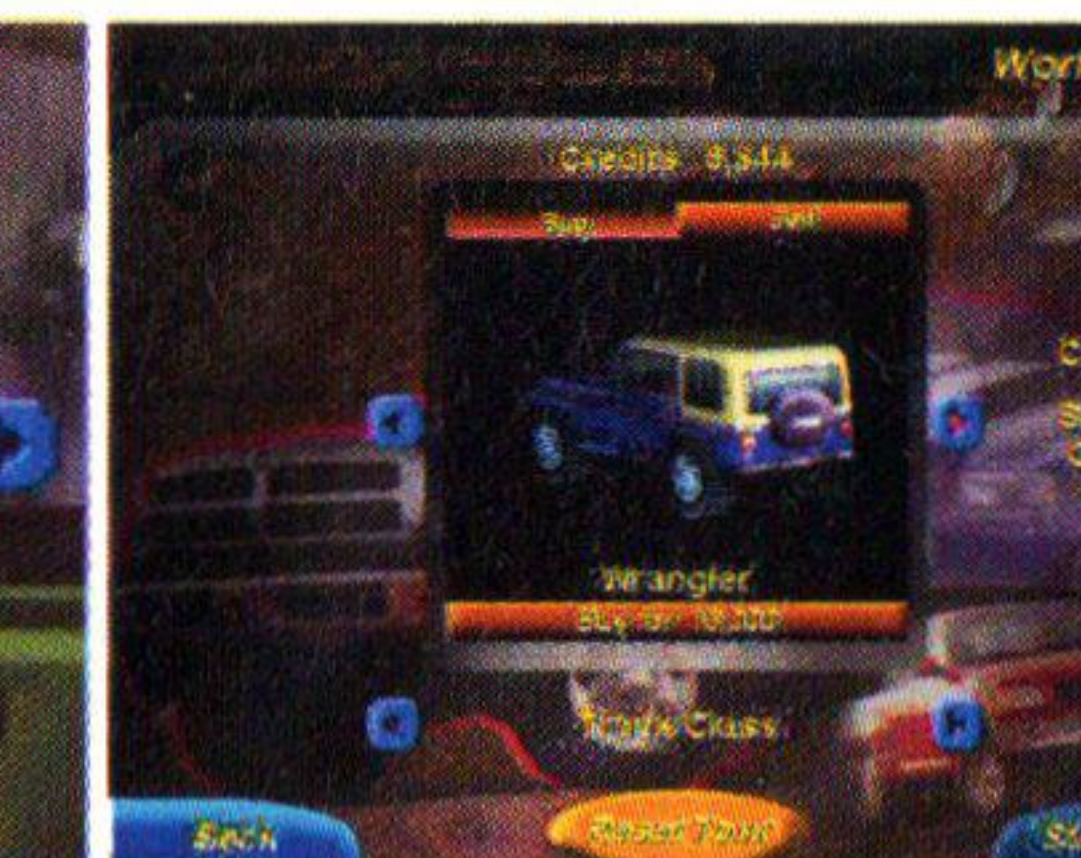
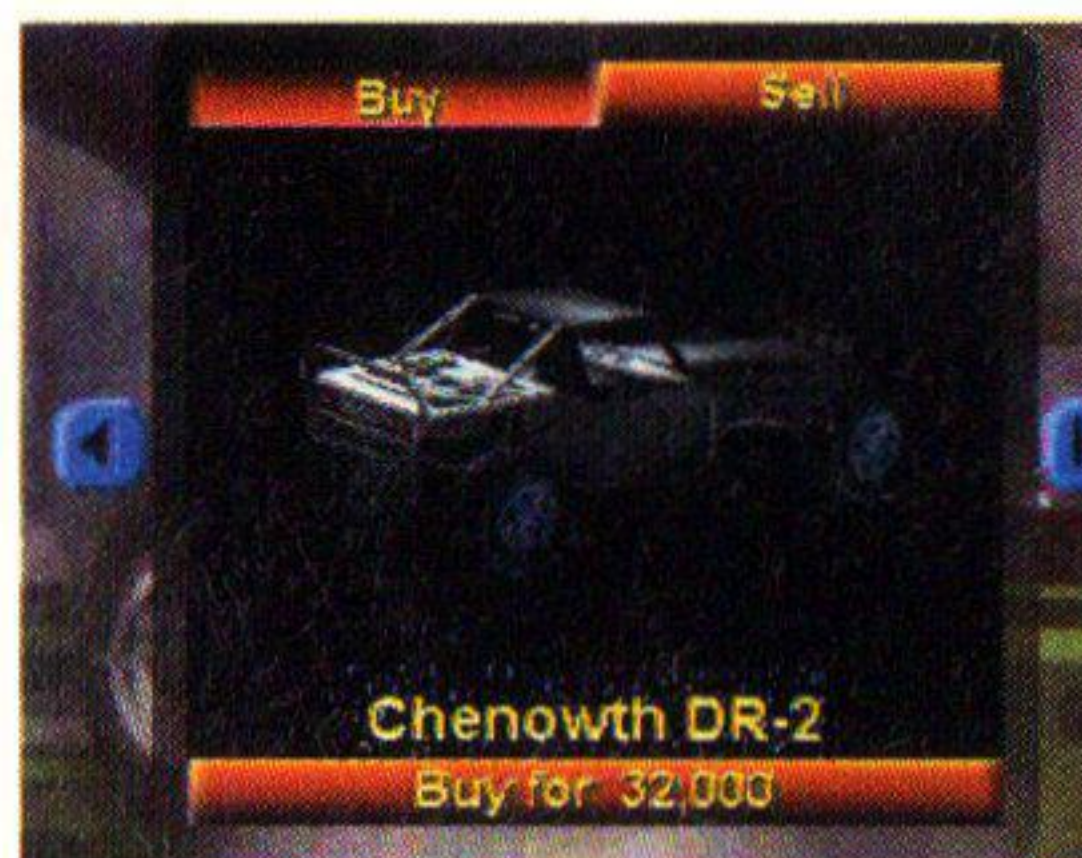
Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Electronic Arts** Developer: **Accolade**
Style: **Racing Sim** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-8**
Processor: **P133** Memory: **16MB** Disk Space: **200MB** 3D Accelerator: **Optional**

Some games, usually the better ones, have certain tell-tale signs that they have been created by people that have an obvious passion for the project they were working on (take *Zelda*, for example). *Test Drive 4x4* is a completely different story altogether.

Running the game on a PII 333 with Voodoo 2 acceleration, the game not only looks terrible, but also runs at a ridiculously low frame rate. The tracks look as though they have been seriously rushed out, with bland repetitive textures, no lighting effects and very little in the way of on-track obstacles. There are a few weed-like plants that slow you down and plenty of trees on some courses, but while hitting one of these on flat ground will bring your car to a complete stop, hit a jump beforehand and you can go straight through them when in mid-air. Many of the tracks are almost completely straight as well – hold down the accelerator and you need only make a few minor adjustments during the race. There are other cars in the race but they mostly travel along as if they were tied together, following exactly the same route. The only reason I found to play the game was that it was so easy – even eating my lunch simultaneously didn't detract from my winning streak. It's a poor game that has obviously had very little time or money spent on it.

Will

VERDICT: 23%

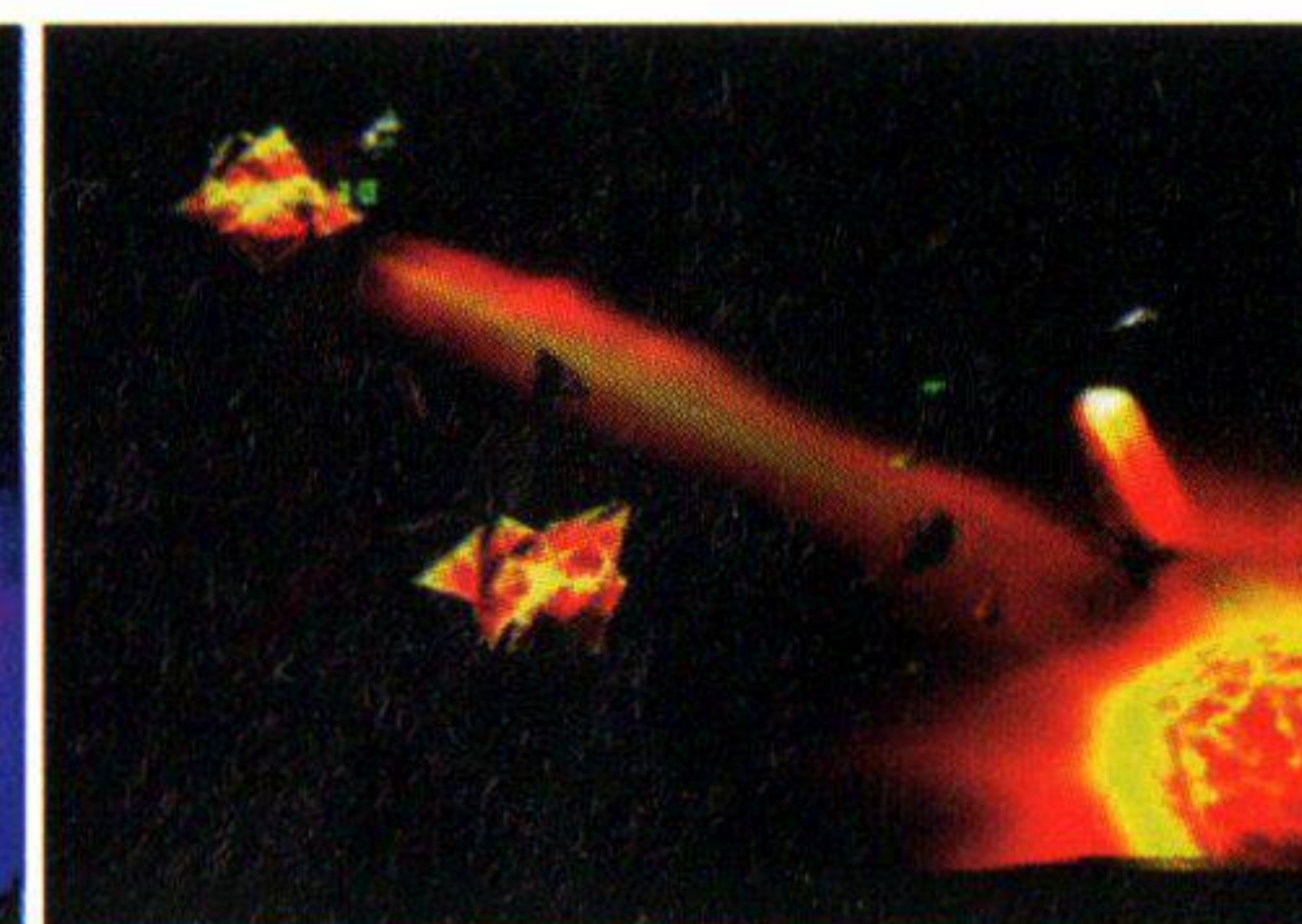
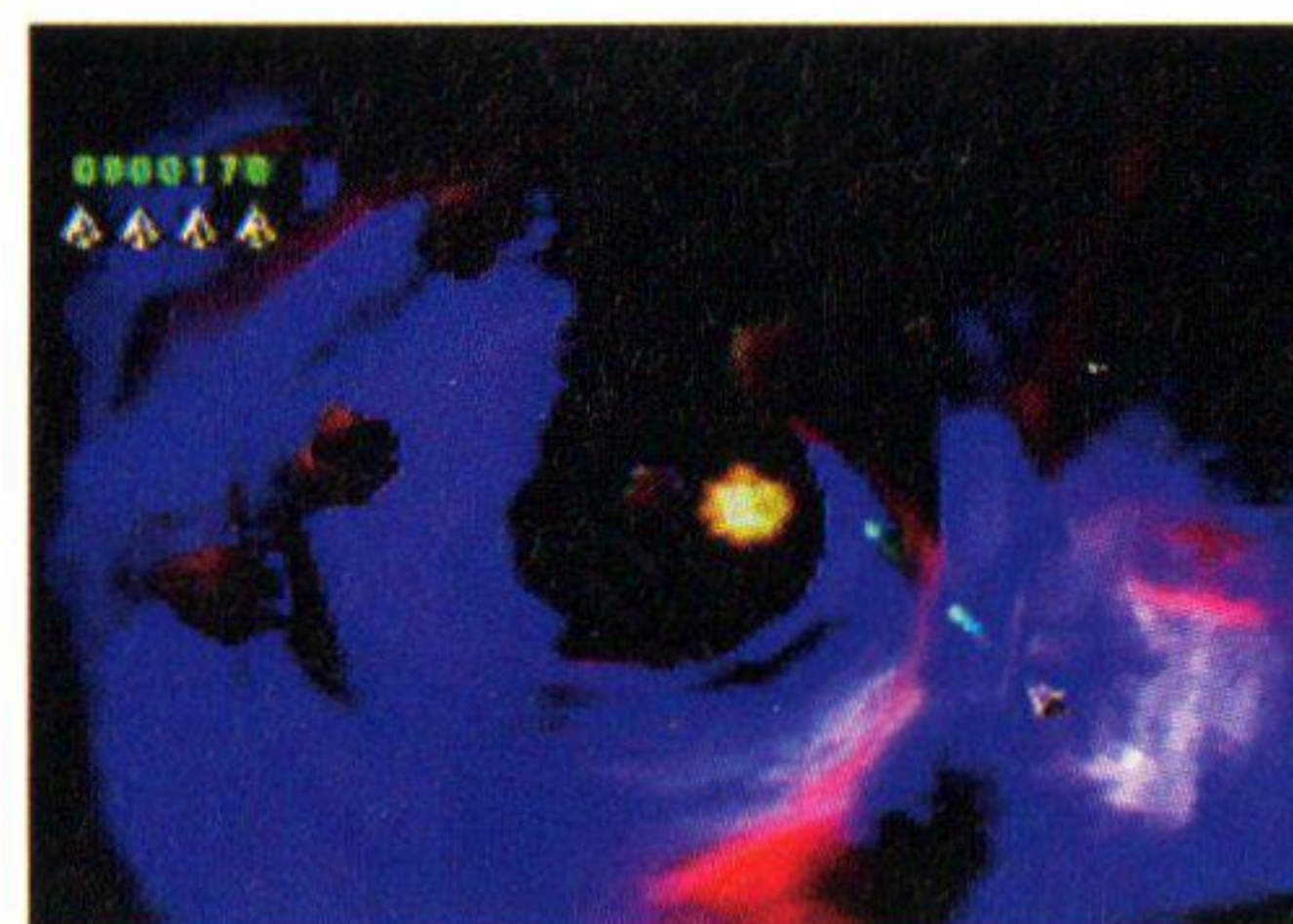


Asteroids

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **Syrox** Style: **Arcade**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£34.99** Players: **1-2** Processor: **P90 P133**
Memory: **16MB 32MB** Disk Space: **70MB 230MB** 3D Accelerator: **Optional**

When I heard that Activision were going to do a new version of the classic Atari arcade game *Asteroids*, I was concerned. I was sixteen when *Asteroids* first appeared in 1979, and it soon became one of THE games to be good at. I thought the idea of an 'improved' version was about as appealing as a techno version of *Stairway to Heaven*. Well, I was wrong. Syrox have done a superb job of keeping the feel of the original, while adding just enough to make it a new game. The 3D graphics look superb, especially with an accelerator card, and the sound effects are reminiscent of the original arcade machine without being annoying. The gameplay is identical to the original. You have the same controls: rotate, thrust, fire and hyperspace. This new version has a few variations, such as crystal asteroids which regenerate if not completely destroyed, and solar flares which can destroy your ship. This is a great version of a classic game, and one which everybody will enjoy. There is even a copy of the original 'vector graphics' arcade game hidden within.

Cliff VERDICT: 87%





Pinky and the Brain: World Conquest



Platform: **PC** Publisher: **South Peak Interactive** Developer: **Gigawatt Studios** Style: **Puzzle** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-4**
Processor: **P166** Memory: **32MB** Disk Space: **65MB** 3D Accelerator: **Optional**

Pinky and The Brain: World Conquest may be a simple idea, but that is usually what makes a great puzzle game. The idea is to capture as many floor tiles as possible by running over them, turning them to your colour. It's not just a case of running around a maze in time, though – there are a number of different floor tiles, portals and power-ups that must be mastered and some very tight time limits to do them in.

Later on in the game you will have to attempt levels with other characters, where you need only make sure you have the highest percentage captured, not the entire level. Other levels include capture the

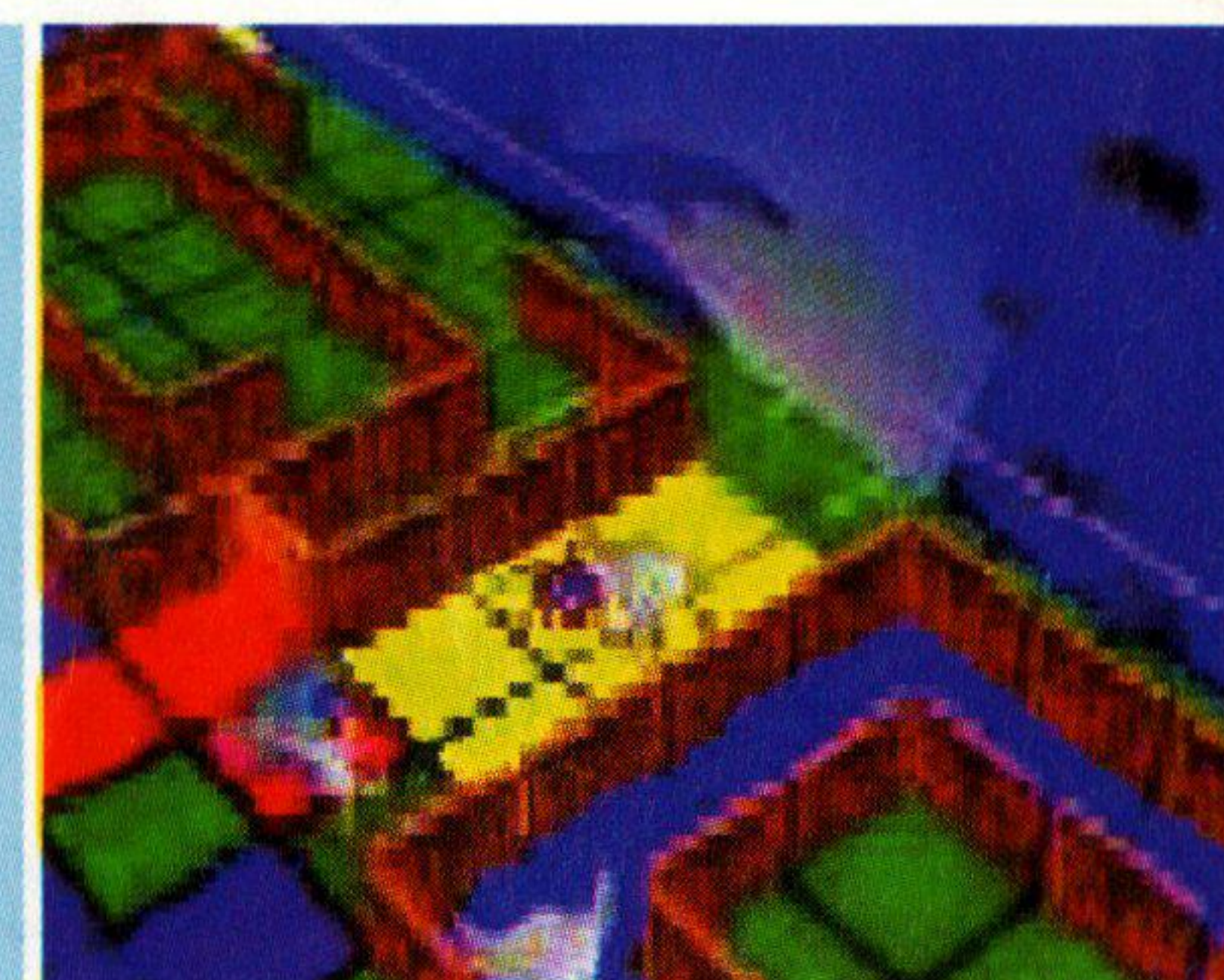
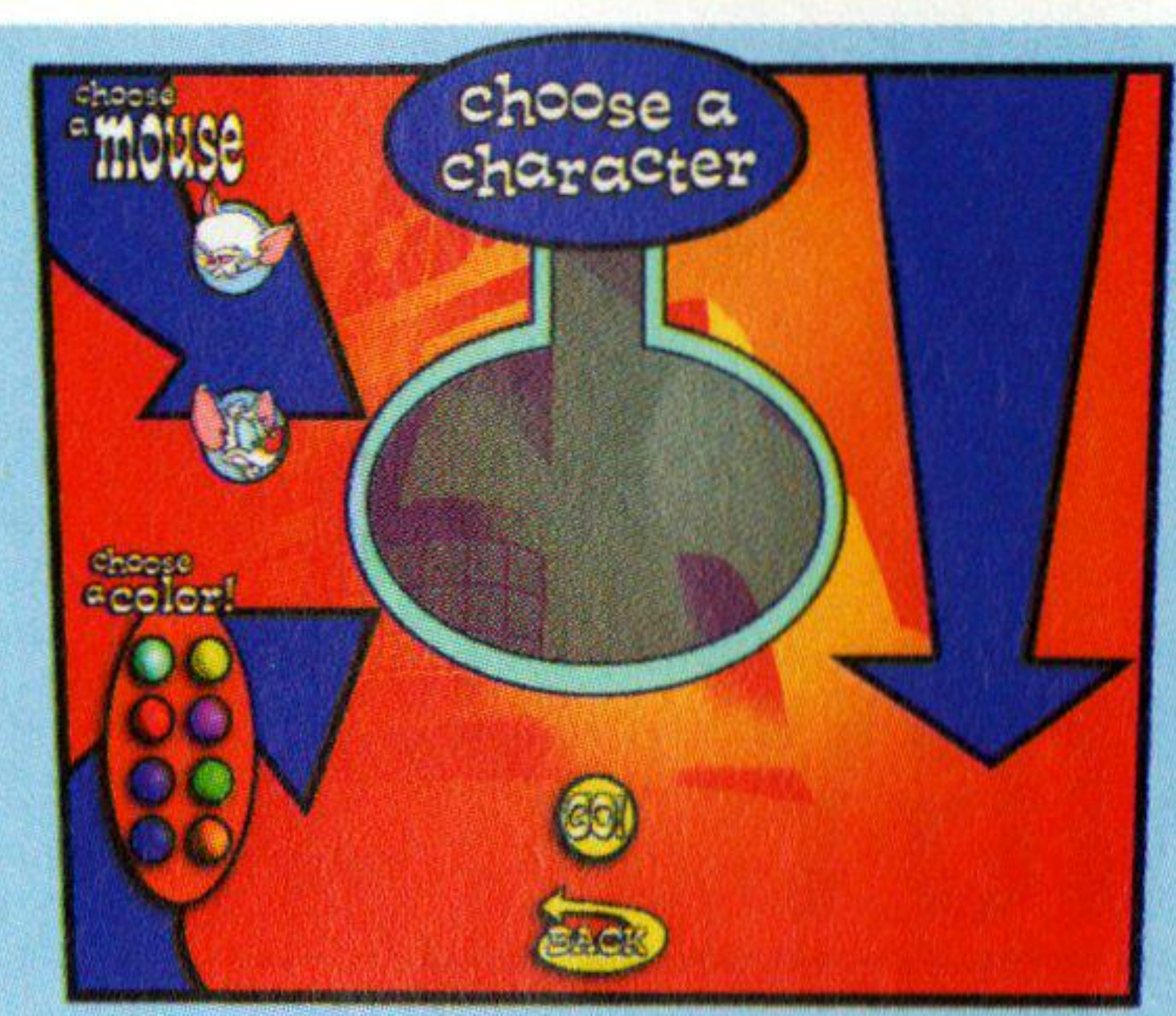
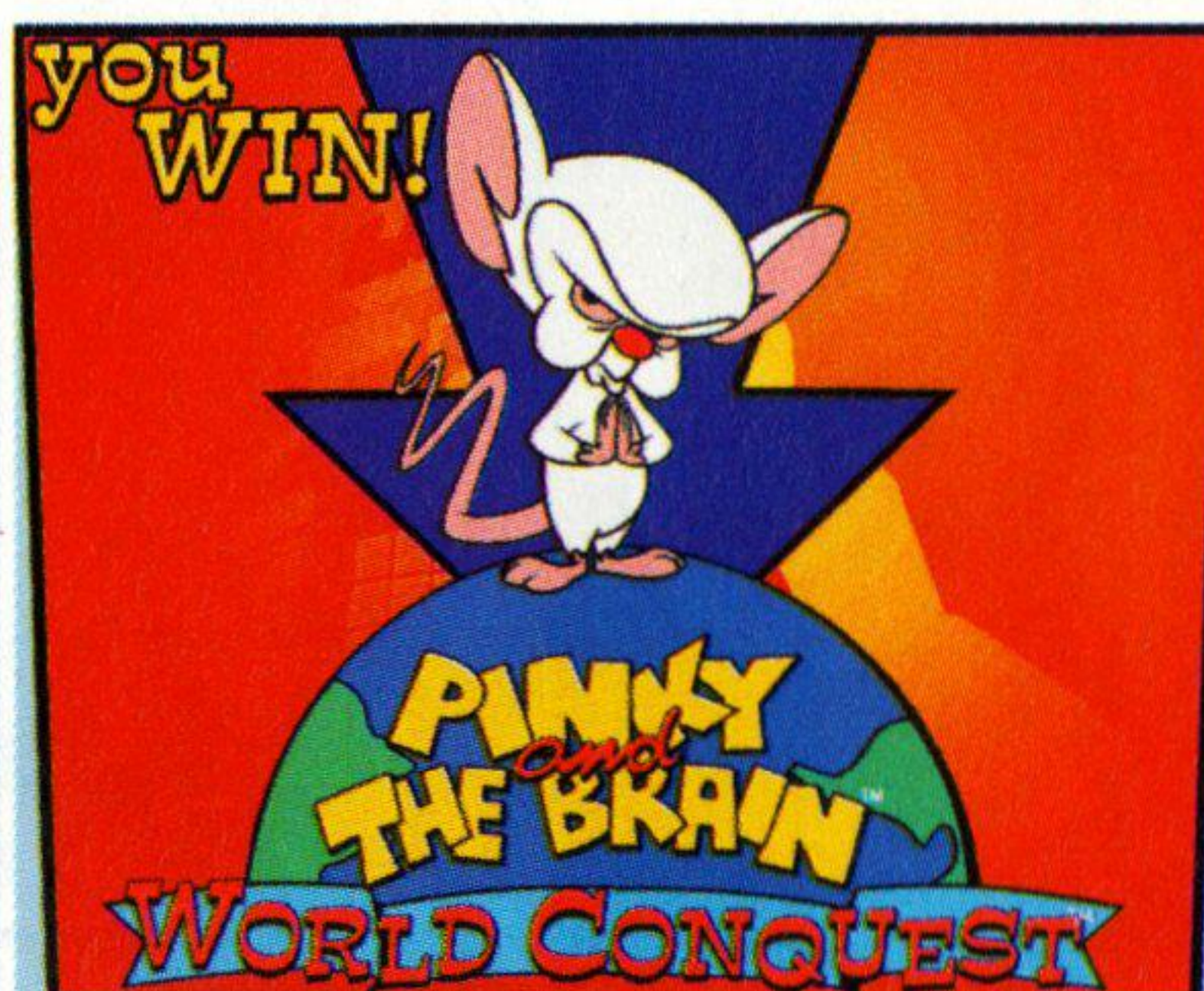
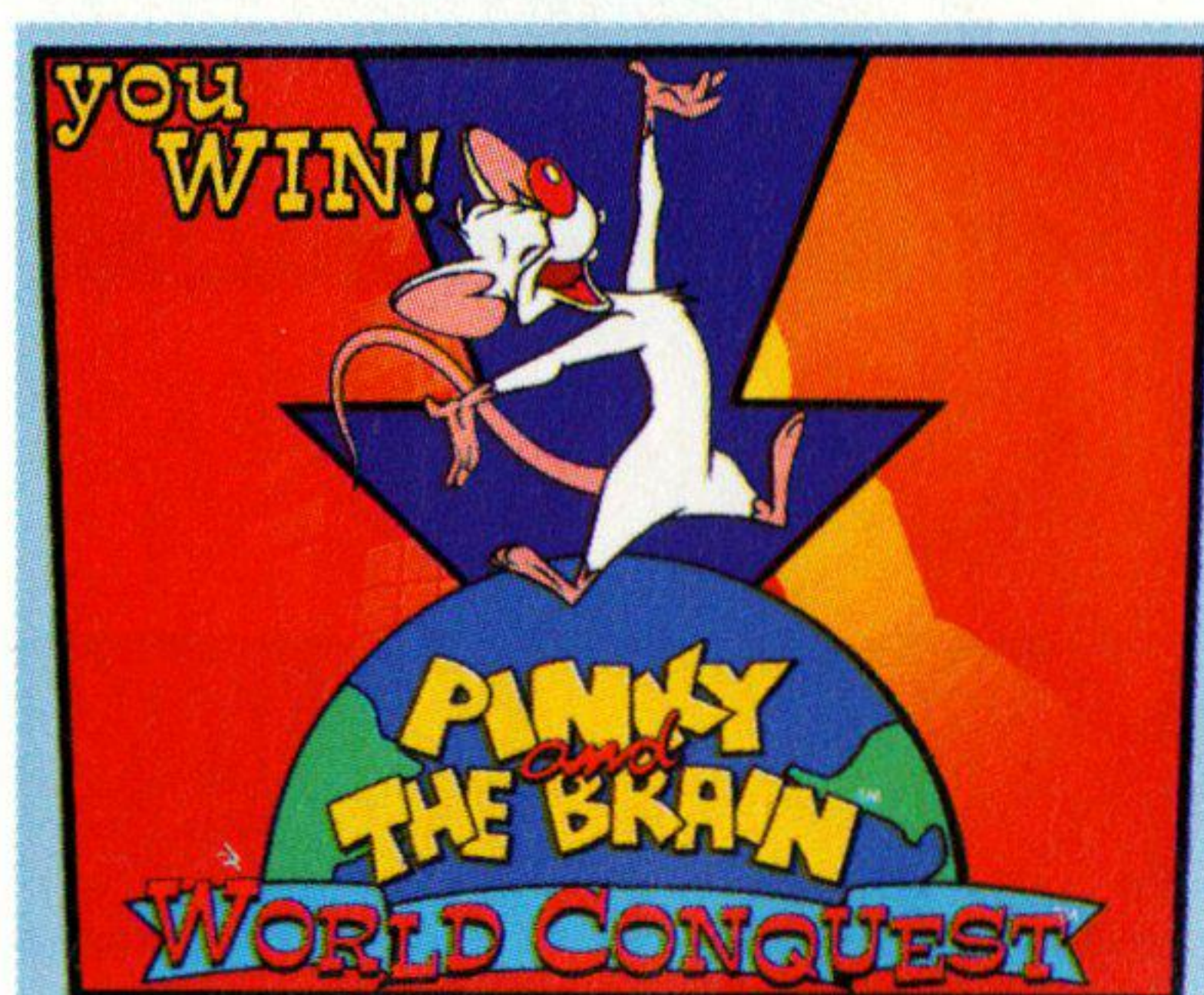
cheese, where each player must attempt to hold the cheese for the longest period of time.

Fans of the series will feel right at home. The game is very well-presented with load of FMV clips of the show and hundreds of crazy soundbites.

The only worry is the lastability of the game. But while older players may finish it quickly, the appeal is still universal. Sadly, multiplayer games cannot be played on a single PC, but the easy-to-use level editor should extend its life span significantly.

Will

VERDICT: 72%



King's Quest VIII



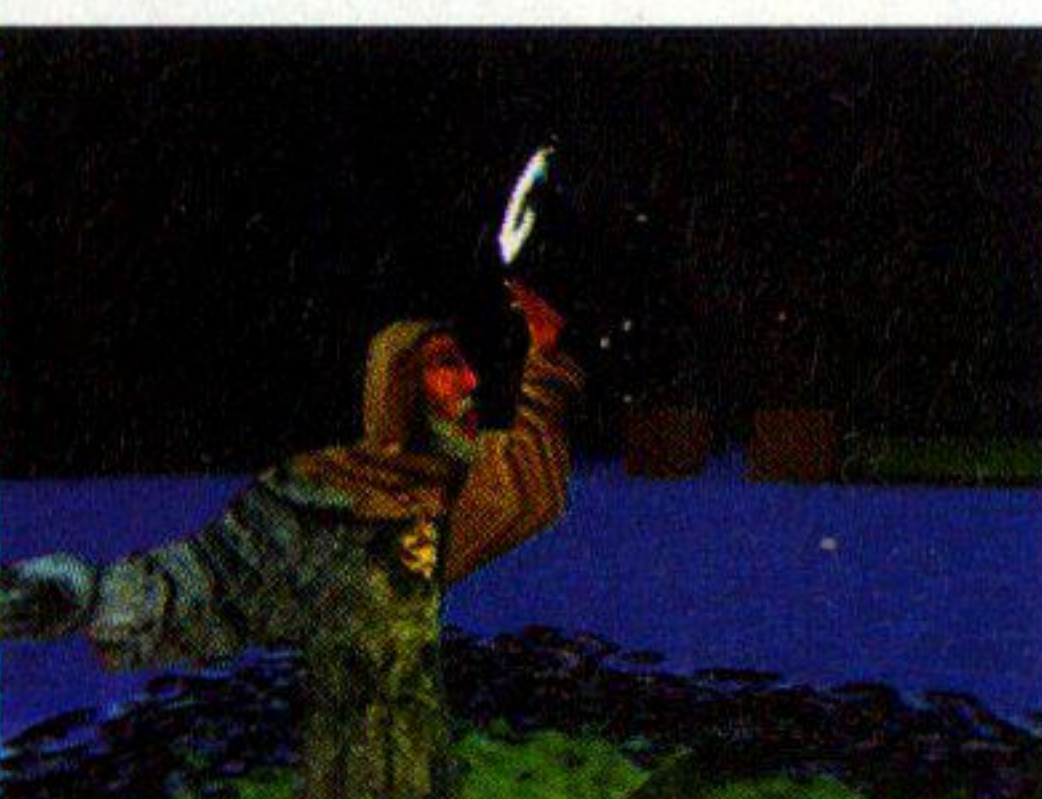
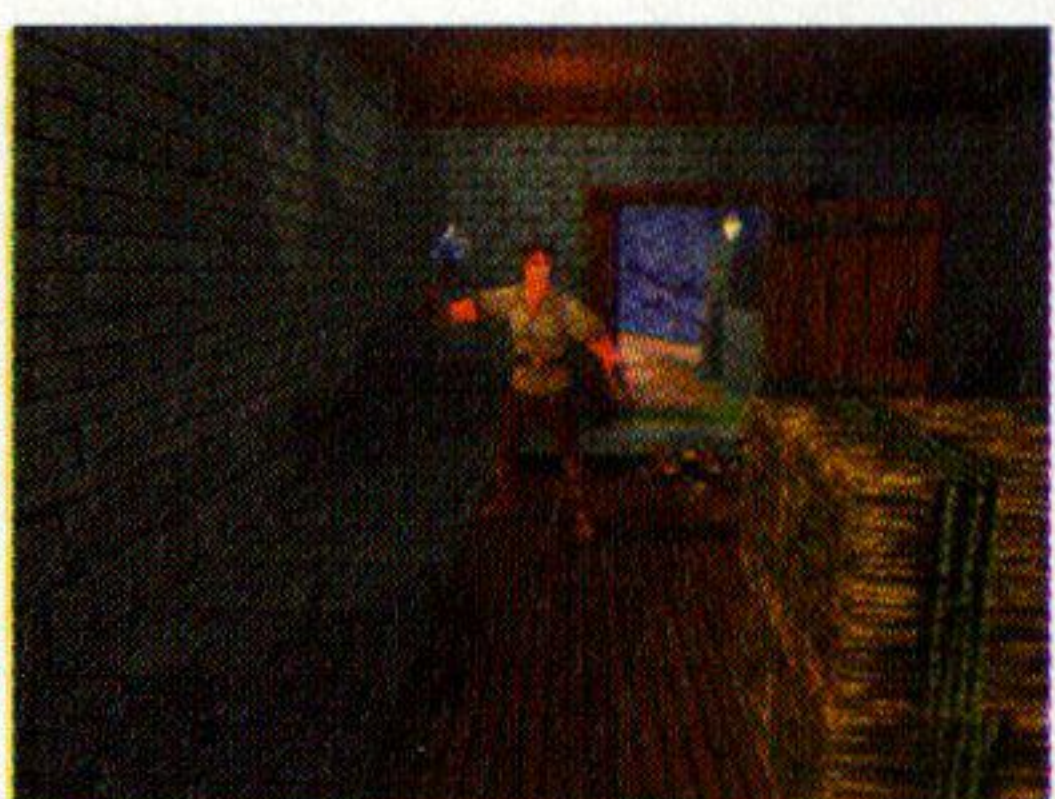
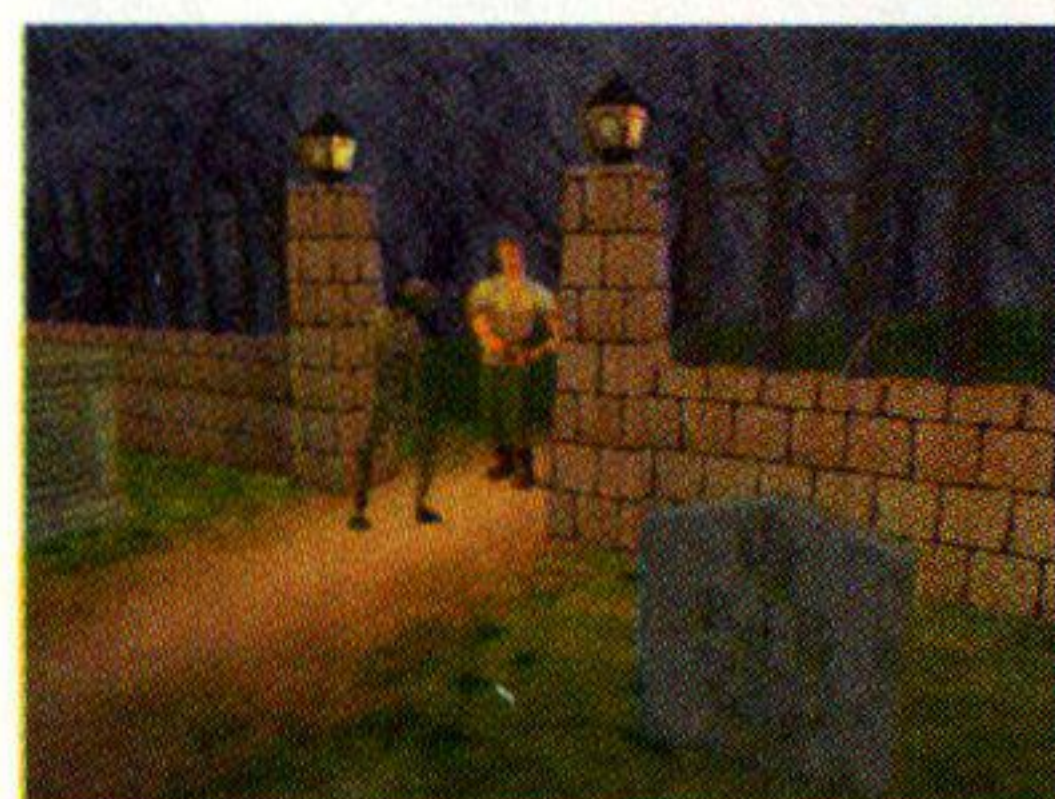
Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Sierra Studios** Developer: **In-House** Style: **3D Adventure**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£34.99** Players: **One** Processor: **P166 P200** Memory: **32MB**
32MB Disk Space: **400MB** 3D Accelerator: **Recommended**

This is the eighth game in the *King's Quest* series, which began with *King's Quest I: Quest for the Crown* back in 1984. The series has boasted many firsts in computer gaming, including EGA colour, CD-ROM, and Sierra's first million pound development budget. I don't know what this chapter in the continuing saga cost to make, but it was probably worth it. Unlike previous *King's Quest* games, *Mask of Eternity* features accelerator-friendly 3D graphics and a following camera third-person perspective. This places it alongside recently released games such as *Tomb Raider III* and *Heretic II*, for the purposes of comparison, and graphically it comes third in that particular race. However, the *King's Quest* games have always been more about puzzle solving than beating things up, and this is the game's great strength. Designer Roberta Williams is more experienced than almost anyone at constructing a good adventure game, and this one keeps you interested even when the odds are against you and the monsters keep knocking you down.

Most of the game elements are fairly straightforward, and the control interface is easy to use. There are some really nice touches in this game, such as the grapple and rope for scaling walls. Why can't Lara Croft do that? *King's Quest: Mask of Eternity* is a quality game, and it will keep you hooked for quite a while.

Cliff

VERDICT: 79%



Game & Watch 2



Platform: **Game Boy Colour** Publisher: **Nintendo**
Developer: **In-House** Style: **Various Retro**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One**

Before the times of the Game Boy, games players on the move had to make do with Nintendo Game & Watch units – not that it was a hardship, the games were all extremely addictive.

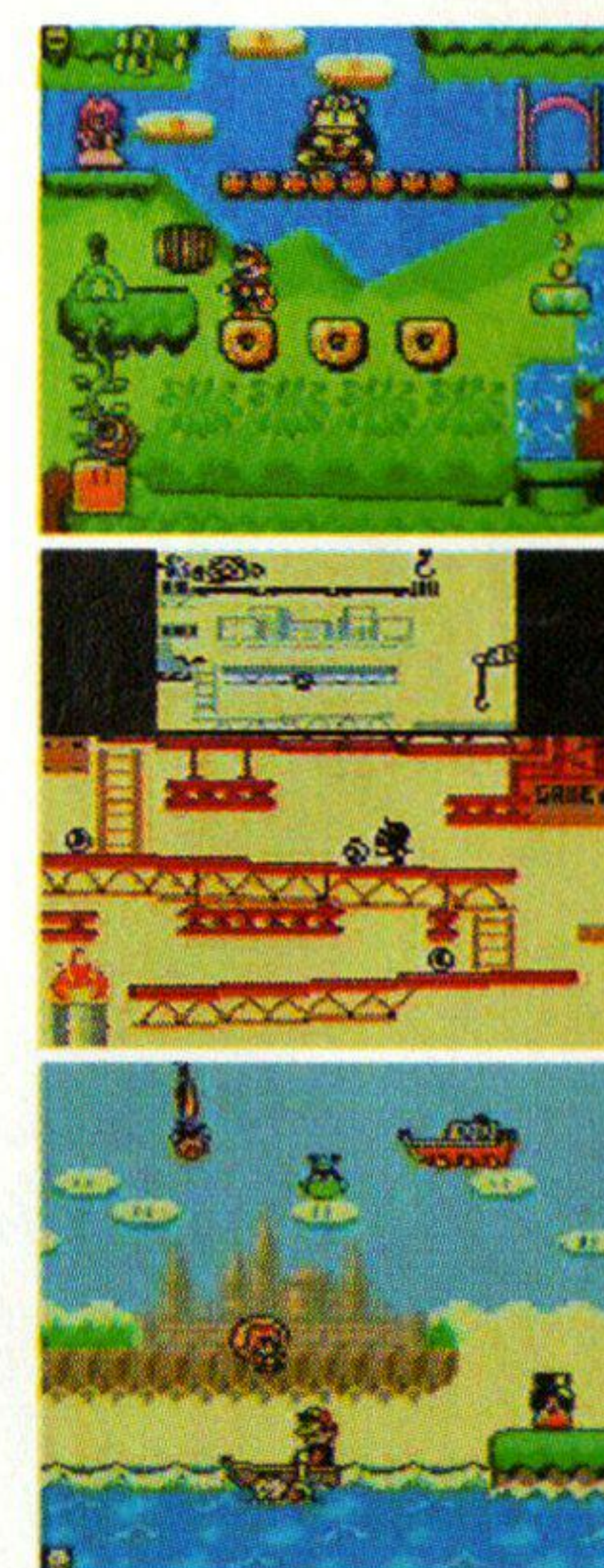
Game & Watch Gallery 2 features five such games – *Parachute*, *Donkey Kong*, *Vermin*, *Chef*, and *Helmet*. There are two versions of each game at your disposal; a perfect recreation of the original, and a modern version with enhanced gameplay and graphics. Obviously none of the games are anything like ground-breaking, but all of them (with the possible exception of the original *Vermin*, which I think is awful) can be enjoyed for hours in much the same way as a game of *Tetris*. You know exactly what you're getting every time you play, and it's a great way to relieve boredom.

Surprisingly, I'd have to say that at the time of writing this would be the cartridge I'd be using to show off my new Game Boy Color to my mates. Not only does it feature some of the best graphics on the system to date, but by achieving high scores there are also plenty of secret bonuses to be found.

Personally, my favourites are definitely the original version of *Donkey Kong* and both versions of *Parachute*, but there's something here for everybody, and players who remember the original hand-helds will not be disappointed.

Justin

VERDICT: 84%



ODDWORLD — ABE'S ODDYSEE



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **GT Interactive** Developer: **Oddworld Inhabitants** Style: **Platform Adventure**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

Oddworld Inhabitant's first installment of the Oddworld saga was so successful that they extended their original plan of five episodes to include the recent *Abe's Exoddus* (Issue 1: 89%).

This 2D platform adventure is similar to games such as the *Heart of Darkness* and *Flashback* in style. You play Abe, a young Mudokon who realises that the meat processing plant he works in is actually using other members of his own race as the main ingredient. Breaking free, you decide to rescue as many other Mudokons as possible and return home.

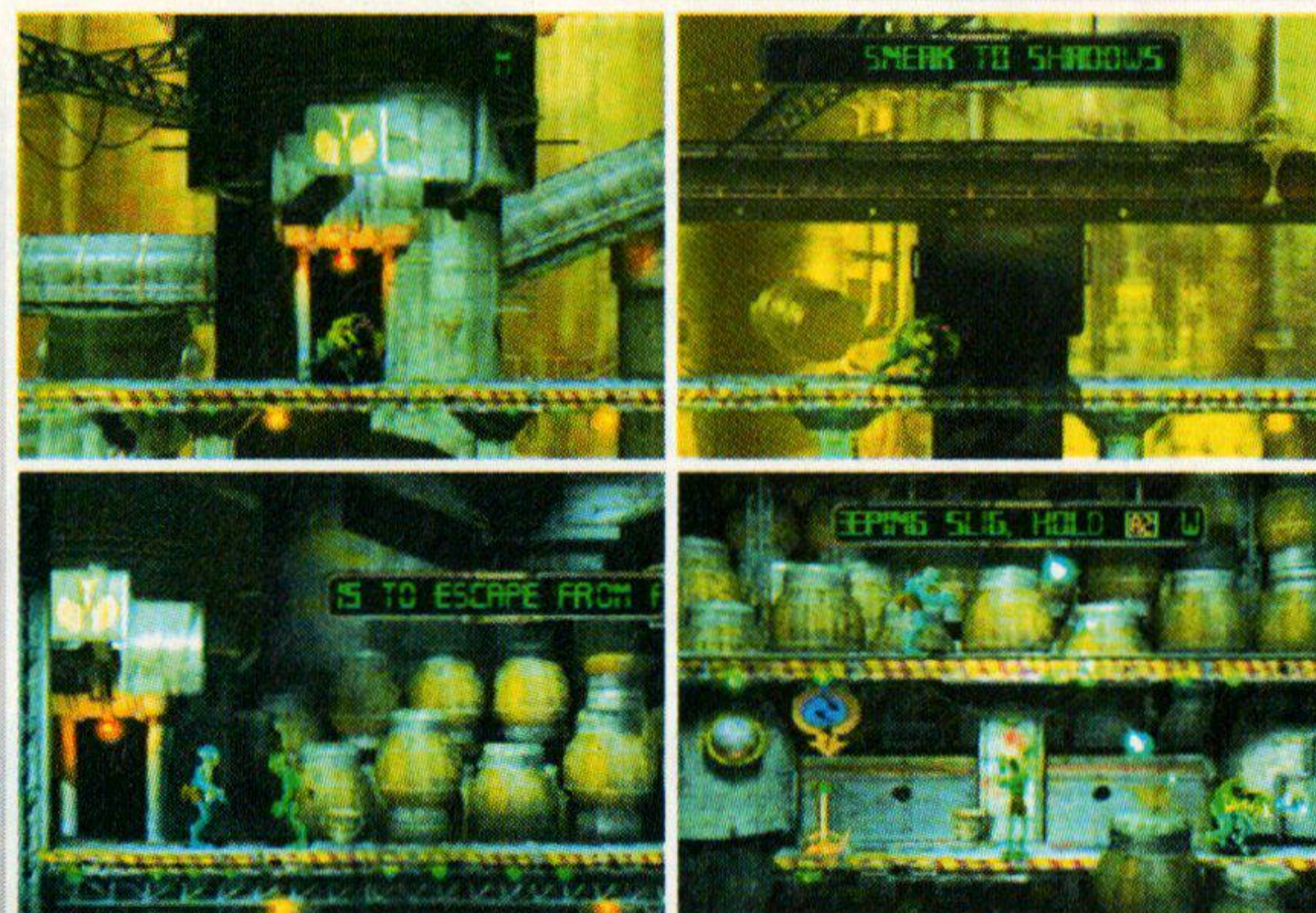
Abe's Oddysee is an extremely well-polished

game with tons of originality and stacks of humour. You have a limited vocabulary that can be used to direct some of the many other Mudokons around the level to a portal and, eventually, home. Abe also has the ability to transfer his spirit to some of the other enemies in the game. Gaining control, this gives him a new vocabulary and access to certain weaponry.

Both *Abe's Oddysee* and its sequel, *Abe's Exoddus* are very similar in style and quality, and anyone owning one should certainly seek out the other. Those who have not yet played either now have the perfect chance to make amends.

Will

VERDICT: 87%



ALIEN TRILOGY



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Acclaim** Developer: **Probe**
Style: **Shoot-'em-up** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No**
Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

With the imminent release of *Alien Vs. Predator*, and the release of the fourth movie in the series, this old game is looking rather dated, but for the time it was first released it was a pretty good first-person shoot-'em-up, especially for the PlayStation. Based on the same 3D graphics engine as *Doom*, it follows the familiar pattern of running around corridors, picking up a selection of weapons and ammunition, and trying to find keys to open various doors. The aliens are pretty scary, running at you out of the shadows, but you won't see them on the walls and ceilings.

The shapes of the various corridors also don't much resemble the sets of the movies, and the level designs are simplistic to say the least, but when the motion tracker starts bleeping, and the traces start closing in, it's hard to resist a quick "Four meters? That's inside the room!"

Anyone who has played a few first-person frag-fest games like this won't find *Alien*

Trilogy to be much of a challenge – in fact I know one twelve-year-old gamer who finished it in only three days. The PlayStation version of *Doom* is a much better game, and is one of the best versions of that great classic, so you might be better advised to get that instead, or wait and pay a little more for *Quake II*.

Cliff

VERDICT: 66%



WORMS



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Team 17** Developer: **In-House**
Style: **Action Strategy** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-4**
Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

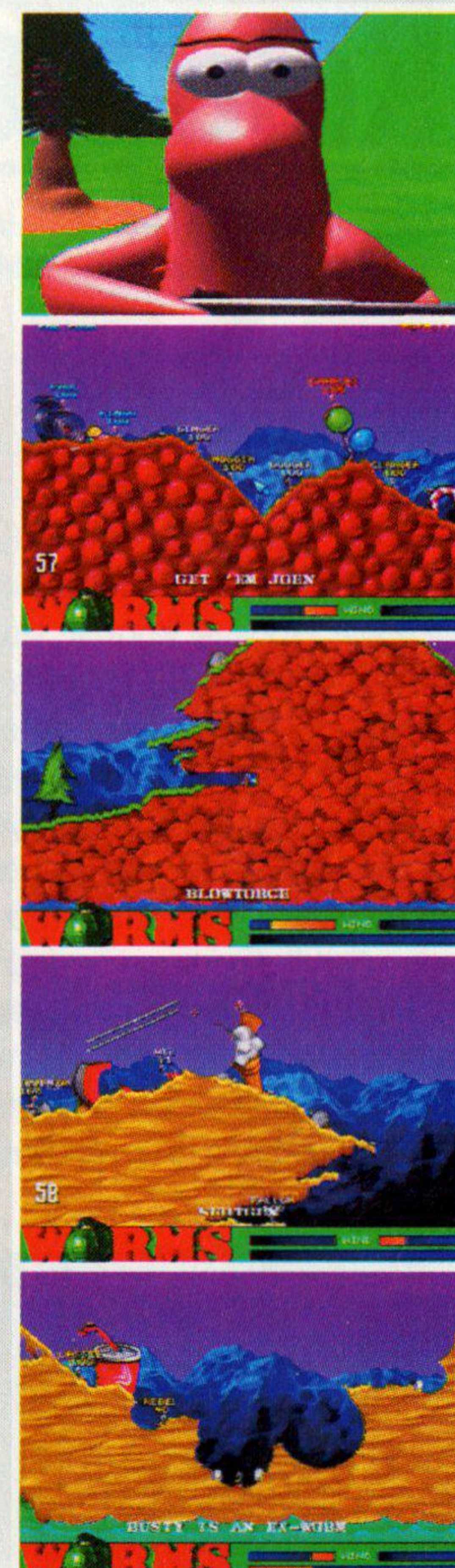
As one of the biggest multi-format games ever, *Worms* is a game you must all know by now. It's a combination of several different genres – you control a team of four worms and, using a variety of kick-ass weaponry, engage in a 2D battle with up to four other teams. The game is turn-based, and during each you will control one worm, first moving him around the map and then selecting a weapon or device to use, ending your turn.

Offensive weaponry takes on a variety of forms – many are affected by both gravity and wind, and so must be fired with accurate aim and power. The others are mostly short-range weapons or attacks – all have their own advantages and disadvantages for any situation.

Worms does look slightly dated nowadays, but then it always did, and this is still as playable as it always has been. Although the single player option won't keep you occupied for any length of time, the strength of the game is in its friendship endangering multiplayer mode, and for that reason alone you'll find yourself pulling this CD out of your collection for many months to come.

Will

VERDICT: 71%





DOOM



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **GT Interactive** Developer: **In-House**
 Style: **First Person Shooter** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-2**
 Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **No**

Arguably one of the most influential games of all-time, *Doom* is a great example of how a classic game can still be playable five years after it was originally seen. *Doom* has spawned a hundred and one copycats, but is still the best on the PlayStation, and this version is easily the best *Doom* game on any system – PC included.

One of the best features of the game is its incredibly immersive atmosphere. Sound plays a major part in this, and the soundtrack on the PlayStation is superb. The music is ambient rather than anything else and features sounds such as clanking chains, moaning and babies crying, which all suits the demonic nature of the game brilliantly.

Graphics are looking a little dated now, but the PlayStation makes up for this with some excellent lighting effects – another factor in the intense atmosphere. Enemies are sprite-based, but this enables the programmers to use lots of them; there's still nothing quite like running into a room full of fire-spitting Imps for giving you a fright.

Put this game in your PlayStation, turn the lights off and ready yourself for one of the scariest video games of all-time.

Nick

VERDICT: 85%



TEKKEN



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Sony** Developer: **Namco**
 Style: **Beat-'em-up** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-2** Analogue: **No**
 Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

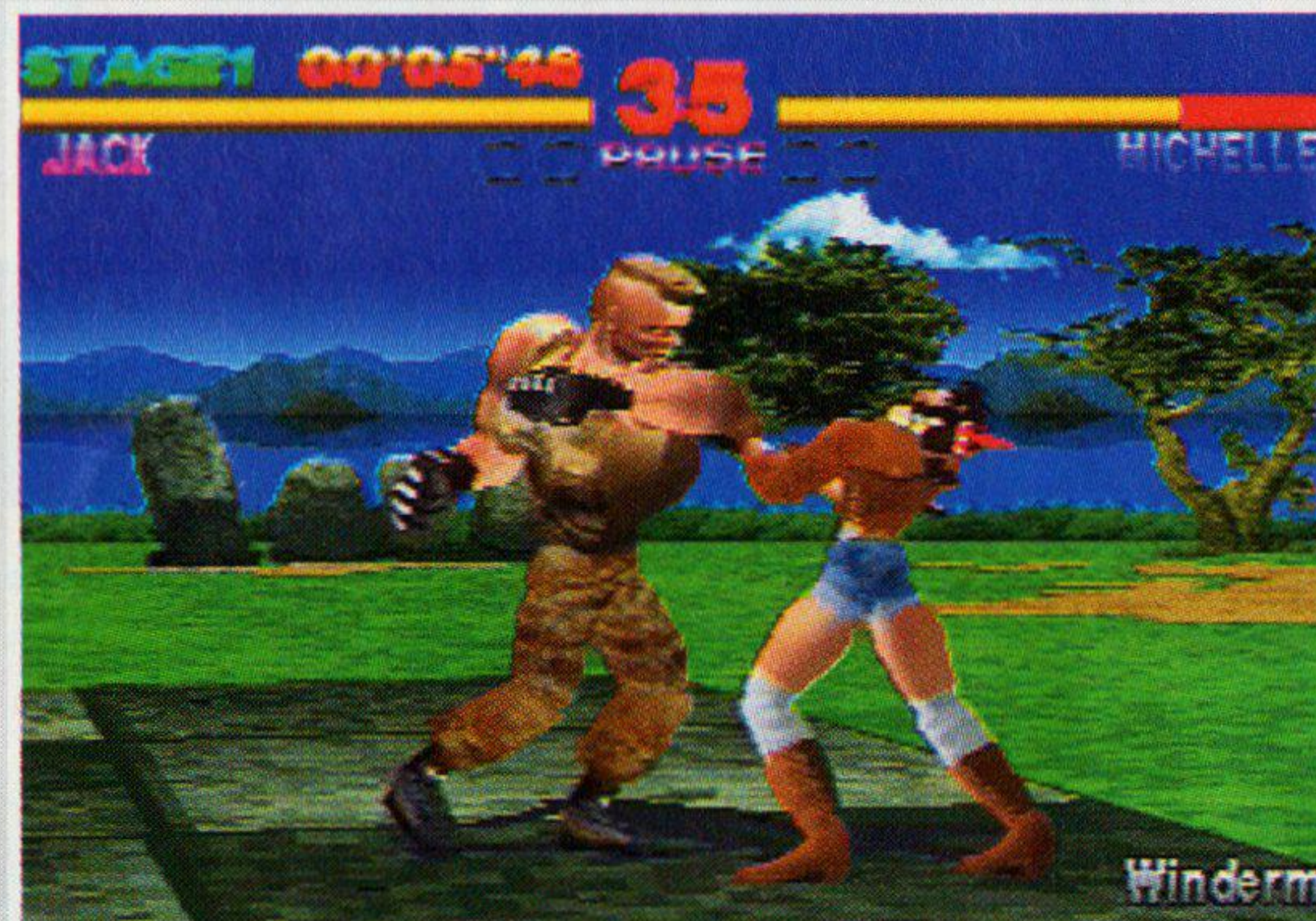
This is going back a bit. *Tekken* was one of the first games to be released for the PlayStation, but despite its age, it doesn't show. Too much. Obviously, comparing this to the later *Tekken* games, you can see the difference, but this game is still one of the best beat-'em-ups on the PlayStation. In fact, it would be fair to say that only *Tekken 2* and *3* better it.

The original *Tekken* compares favourably with the second instalment in terms of graphics, but then it loses out to that game on the number of moves and characters. There just is no comparison between this and the third game. That's it in a nutshell. *Tekken* is still a great game, but has been superseded a long time ago – a sign of how good the *Tekken* games have become.

It's difficult to recommend this game to anyone who owns either of the other *Tekken* games unless, of course, you are one of those people who likes to collect these sorts of things.

Nick

VERDICT: 87%



GRAND THEFT AUTO



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Take 2 Interactive** Developer: **DMA Design** Style: **Gangster Sim**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

What a great idea for a video game – make a living, breathing city, add lots of criminals and make the player one of them. When *Grand Theft Auto* was first released, the game caused a certain amount of controversy. 'This game makes people joy ride', came the cries from the more conservative sections of the media. It doesn't, but this is one of the most innovative games ever to grace the PlayStation.

The whole game is open ended, with the player's only objective to make a certain amount of money to progress to the next city. You start off a rookie criminal and soon get lured in the seedy underworld, taking part in more and more elaborate crimes. Although the game lets you do basically what you want, when you want to, there are certain number of jobs open to you via the phones in the city. Every car in the cities is available for you to drive – you just have to steal it first.

As an added bonus, the Platinum edition of *GTA* has been souped up and now runs much more smoothly than the original release, which suffered from a lot of slow down. This is one of the most immersive games ever and you warm to the life of a gangster. It is a sign of a great game that even when you're not making money, it's still just great fun nicking cars and burning around the city whilst trying to avoid the cops. If you've ever had an interest in the dark side of city life, then *GTA* is the game for you. It does it with a lot of style and a wicked sense of humour. Excellent.

Nick

VERDICT: 89%



TOMB RAIDER



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Eidos** Developer: **Core Design** Style: **Action Adventure**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

A lot has happened to the lead character of the *Tomb Raider* games, and playing this takes you back to a time when Lara Croft was just another anonymous game character. It also gives you an opportunity to see exactly how far the game engine progressed over the next two games. Compare the original to number two and three and you'll notice a great loss of speed and frame rate – something which is a great distraction from the gameplay.

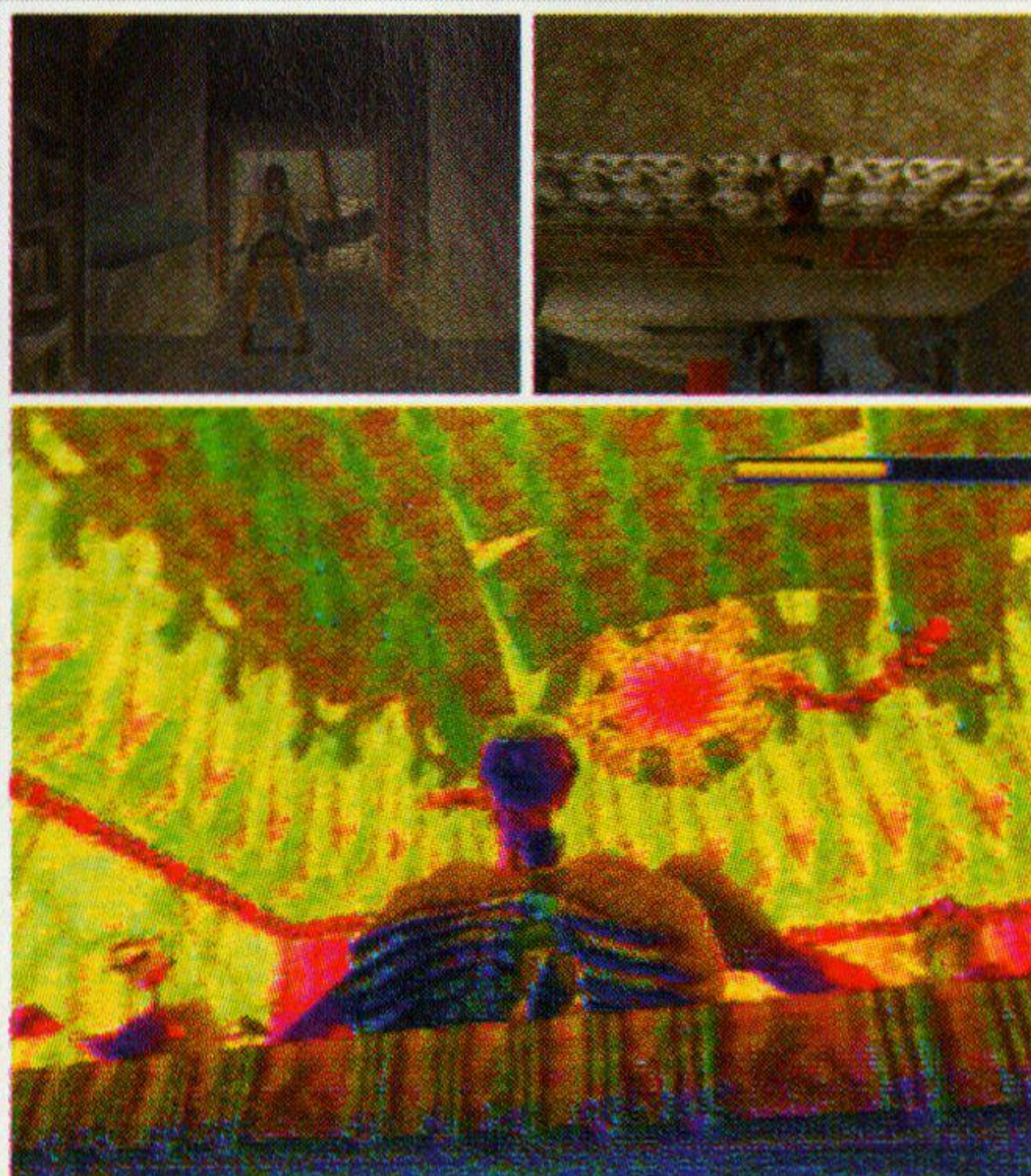
However, this is still arguably the best of the *Tomb Raider* games, simply because of the wonderful level design and learning curve. The level design in particular is often streets ahead of the last two games and some of the ideas constantly wow the player, like the time you first step out from a door only for the camera to pan out and reveal that you are actually stood on top of an hundred foot high sphinx.

Graphically, the game isn't too far behind the other games and, considering the game is over two-years-old, it is still head and

shoulders over much of the competition. Hey, for twenty quid, you can't go wrong! A worthy addition to your collection, even if it is just to own a piece of video game history, which *Tomb Raider* undoubtedly is.

Nick

VERDICT: 89%



WIPEOUT 2097



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Psygnosis** Developer: **In-House**
Style: **Racing** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-2**
Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

It may be two years old, but *Wipeout 2097*, unlike its predecessor, has aged well. Graphically it is still impressive and very smooth while managing to move along at a pretty impressive pace. The game straps the player inside a futuristic hovercraft in a race against fourteen other contenders, all of which are very competitive. Races begin with players spread out over a large area, so weaving your way through to first position is both a tense and difficult task.

Scattered around on the floor are a number of speed boosts and power-ups to help you along the way. Weapons can remove immediate opponents from in front and behind or protect you from their attacks. Your ship's energy bar will drop after direct hits or collisions with other vehicles or walls, but it can be replenished in the pits, usually situated near the starting grid as in the similar *F-Zero* game from Nintendo.

After recently playing the Nintendo conversion, *Wipeout 2097* is the predictably inferior game, but it separates itself well from the other PlayStation racers and still rates very highly in the genre.

Will

VERDICT: 73%





COMMAND AND CONQUER



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Electronic Arts** Developer: **Westwood** Style: **Strategy**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **No**

The point and click strategy game has been a huge success on the PC – mainly due to this game, *Command & Conquer*. One of the biggest selling PC titles over the last few years, and you can see why. The game is basically an arcade strategy game, calling on players to use both strategy and timing in order to succeed.

The game is set in a future where a valuable mineral is the cause of a major war between NOD (government forces) and GDI (a revolutionary group).

The beauty is that you can take control of either of the forces, with missions and technology differing significantly. There is also some superb FMV footage which tells the story brilliantly.

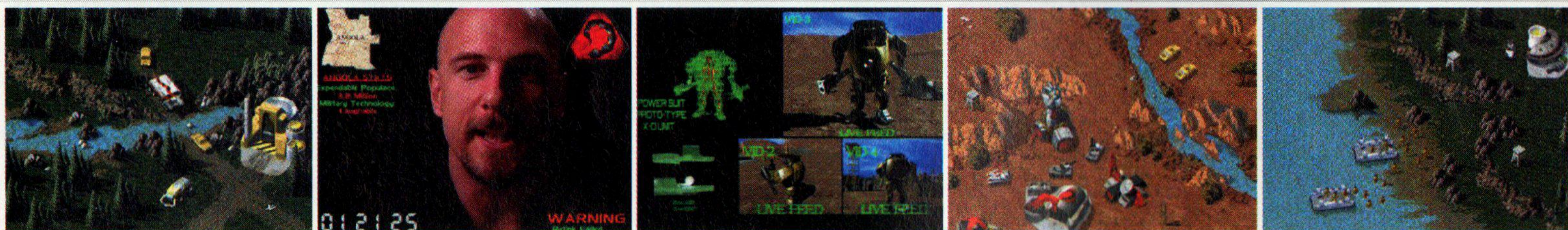
Command & Conquer satisfies that megalomaniac desire brilliantly: absolute control over an army, decisions of life and death are yours. But that's not just why *C&C* is so good – level design is spot on, causing players to spend many hours on some of the later levels figuring out the correct strategy. This game will give even

the most experienced gamer plenty of challenge. There is also a wonderful variety to the missions; some involve you using a lone commando to take out key enemy installations whilst others have gigantic battles.

C&C will satisfy both strategy enthusiasts and beginners alike – it is accessible and challenging at the same time. If you've never played this kind of game before then it'll give you a superb insight into what can be an excellent genre.

Nick

VERDICT: 80%



MICRO MACHINES V3



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Codemasters** Developer: **In-House** Style: **Arcade Racer**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-4** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

This hugely successful title has now received its Platinum re-release, and, luckily, it's still as playable as it was two years ago.

As you might expect, *Micro Machines V3* involves racing tiny vehicles along a race circuit of equal proportions. This brings a lot of scope for where each race can be based, and each of the general household terrains are packed full of the everyday objects you may associate with them. The courses are excellently designed too – you jump from pool table to pool table, dodge the spilt baked beans and the rubber ducks, and leap over the breakfast cereal packets. It not only looks interesting and

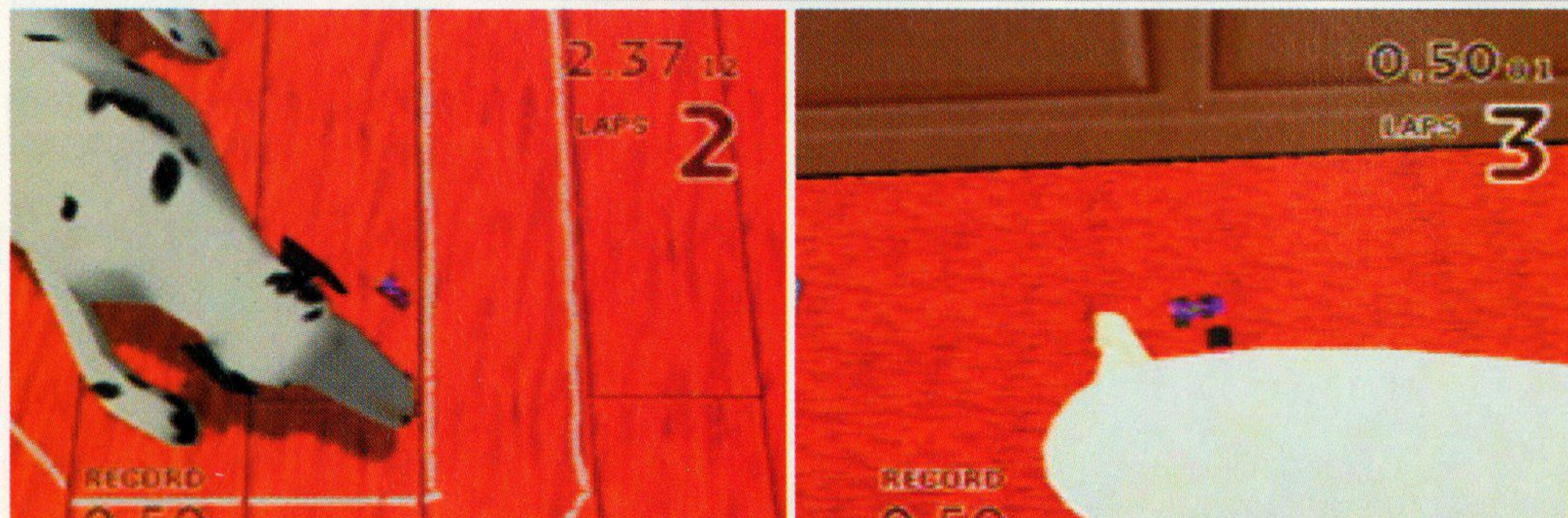
varied, but adds originality and many humorous touches that compliment the gameplay rather than detracting from it.

Micro Machines V3 uses a true 3D modelled environment and still looks pretty good. It's extremely addictive, and with so many different games and styles to try, there's enough variety to last you a while.

This is an immensely fun game. It is best played in multiplayer mode, but it's still pretty good on your own, and while it's obviously aimed at the younger audience, there's most definitely something for everyone here.

Will

VERDICT: 77%



PORSCHE CHALLENGE



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **SCEE** Developer: **In-House** Style: **Racing Sim**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **1-2** Analogue: **Yes** Dual Shock: **Yes** Memory Card: **One Block**

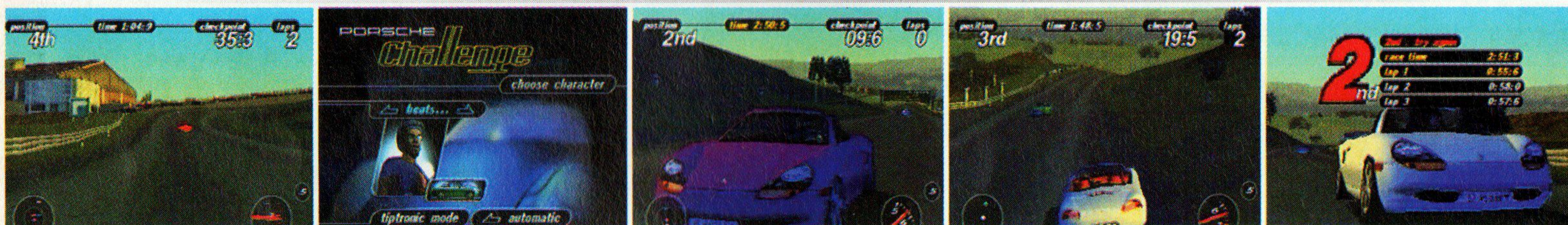
Until *Gran Turismo* came along and blew everyone away, this was one of the best racing games on the PlayStation. It only had one car, the Porsche Boxter, and a limited number of tracks, but the handling was accurately modelled, although it does take a bit of getting used to. However, it remains a very playable game, especially with an analogue controller. The main challenge comes from the superb track designs, with shortcuts and secrets which open up at certain times. There are a variety of weather conditions, and snow on the road really does make driving a dangerous business.

The graphics engine is also very good – not quite the masterpiece that is *GT*, but superior to *Rage Racer*. The use of motion capture gives the game a realistic look, especially the other drivers. Brake lights, lens flare and shadows are all handled smoothly, and the modelling of the cars is highly realistic.

The AI controlling the other drivers can be a little erratic at times, and downright vicious on occasion, but with practice you can usually win through and claim the black test car, the main prize in the game. The only problem with *Porsche Challenge* is that if you already have *Gran Turismo*, you don't really need it.

Cliff

VERDICT: **71%**



TIME CRISIS



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Namco** Developer: **In-House** Style: **Light Gun Shoot-'em-up**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

Time Crisis is not a game that should need much describing. The popular arcade light gun title sees you attempting to thwart a criminal hostage operation by generally shooting your way through an endless parade of henchmen and general scum. The plot is told via a series of cut scenes that feature prominently throughout the game. It's not hugely detailed, but it's a nice inclusion to a game that didn't really need it.

There are several game modes to choose from – arcade, a well-implemented time mode, and a special mode which is essentially a copy of the arcade but with a different setting. Unlike many similar games, you are not constantly moving through the level – your character will always duck behind an object, and by holding down a button you can move out, unload your clip, and duck back down again to reload. It's a system that works very well, though it can become a bit repetitive.

As with almost every other game of this type, the enjoyment you take from the game depends a lot on the quality of your light gun. This is a very good arcade conversion that should belong to all owners of a decent gun. The PlayStation can do a lot better than this, but at £20 it's great value for money.

Will

VERDICT: **79%**





CRASH BANDICOOT



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Sony** Developer: **Naughty Dog** Style: **Platformer**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **No**

The original *Crash Bandicoot* game caused quite a stir when it was first released back in 1996. Not only was it the first game to utilise the PlayStation's high-res mode, it also marked the first appearance of Sony's much-heralded mascot.

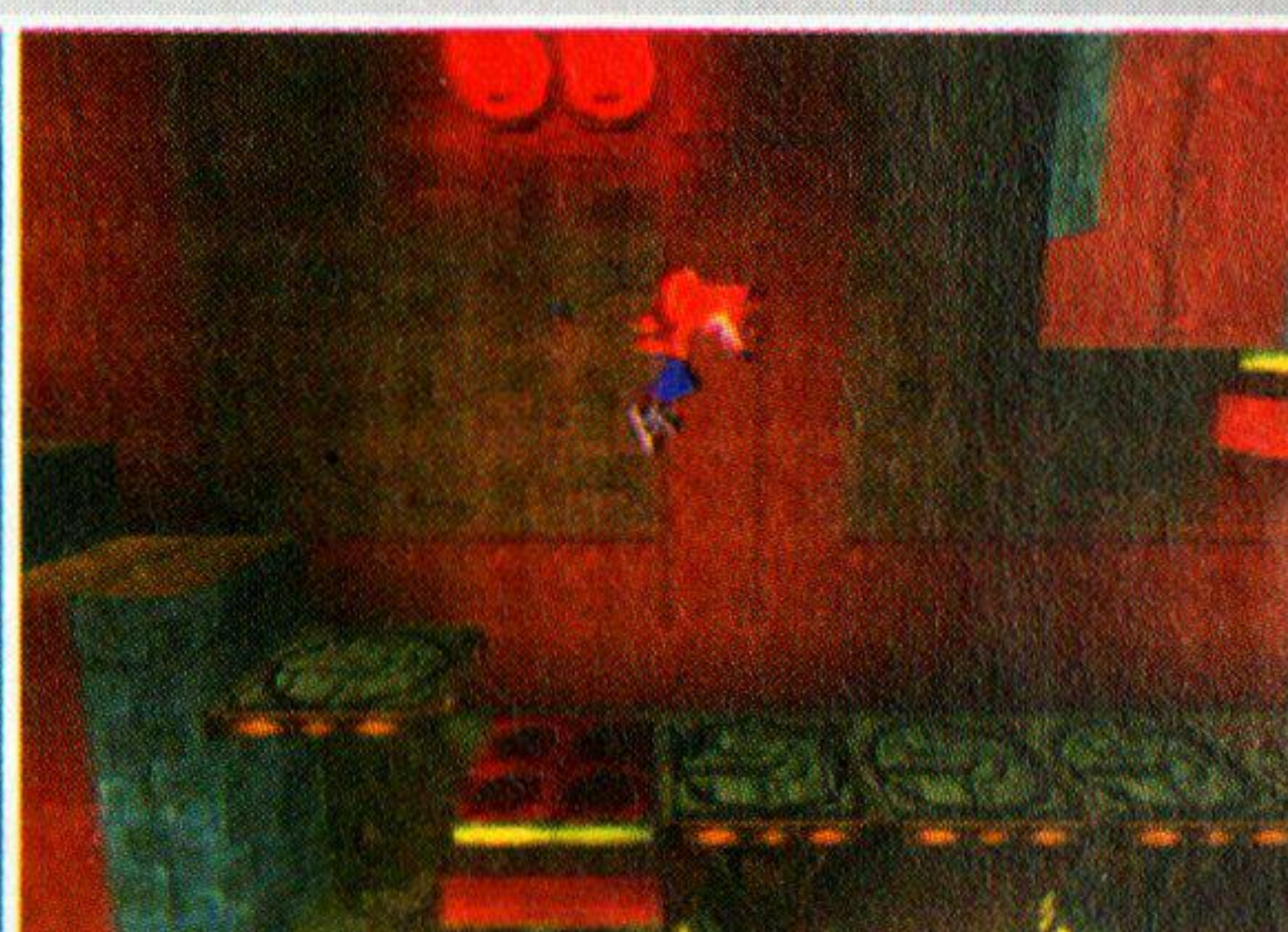
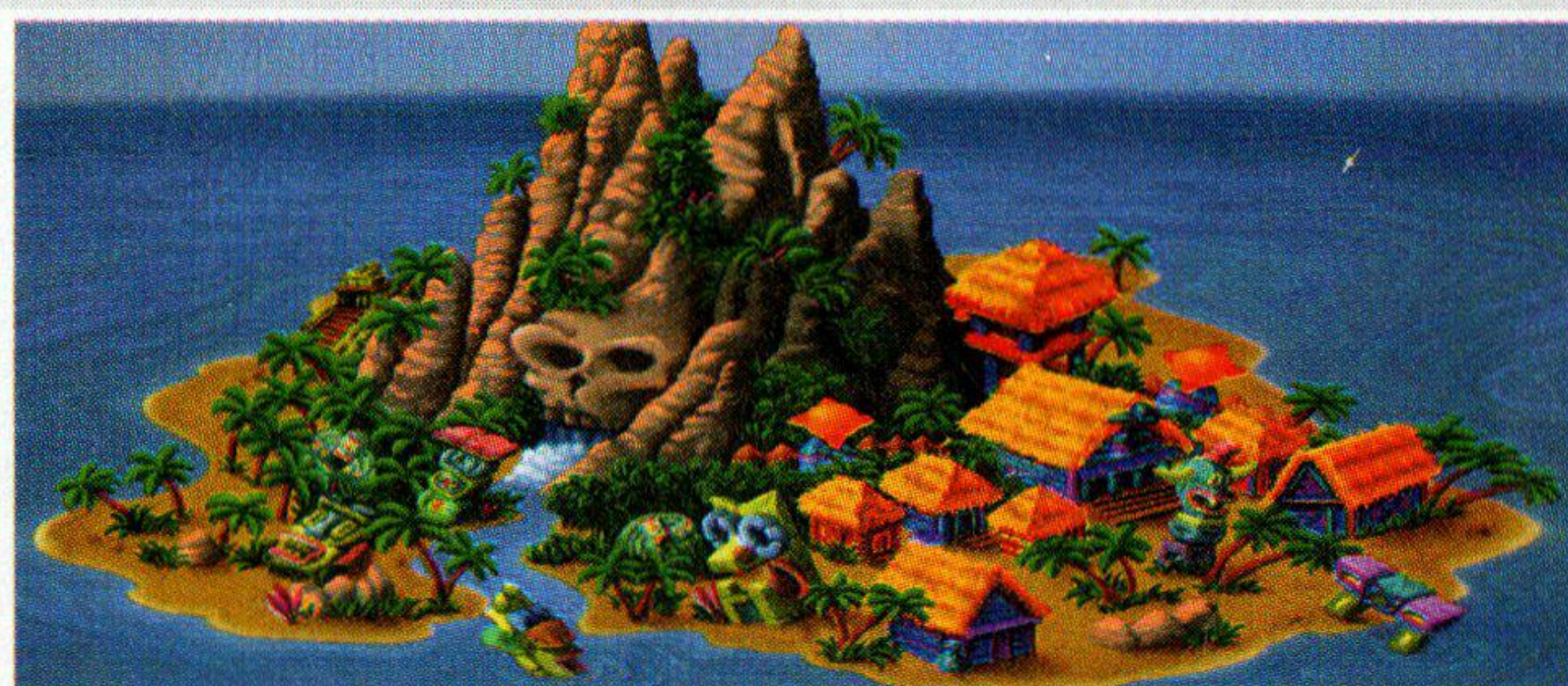
Picking up on the above point, *Crash Bandicoot* still looks gorgeous even by today's standards. It is a bright and colourful platformer in the best traditions of Nintendo, but with a bit PlayStation attitude thrown in for good measure. Actually, *Crash Bandicoot* is not really a platformer in the traditions of Nintendo, and when compared to the great *Mario 64* it's found somewhat lacking. Exploration plays no part in *Crash*, and it is a very linear affair, taking traditional platforming antics

(collecting fruit, jumping on baddies' heads) into a 2D/3D hybrid. Some of the levels are into the screen, some of the levels are out of the screen, and others are side on. There are some magical moments, but it remains that *Crash Bandicoot* is game for platform beginners.

What *Crash Bandicoot* represents is classic platform playability brought right up to date with some flashy graphics and wonderful characterisation. The two sequels have done the formula to death, but here you will find the Bandicoot playability in its purest and best form.

Nick

VERDICT: **74%**



FADE TO BLACK



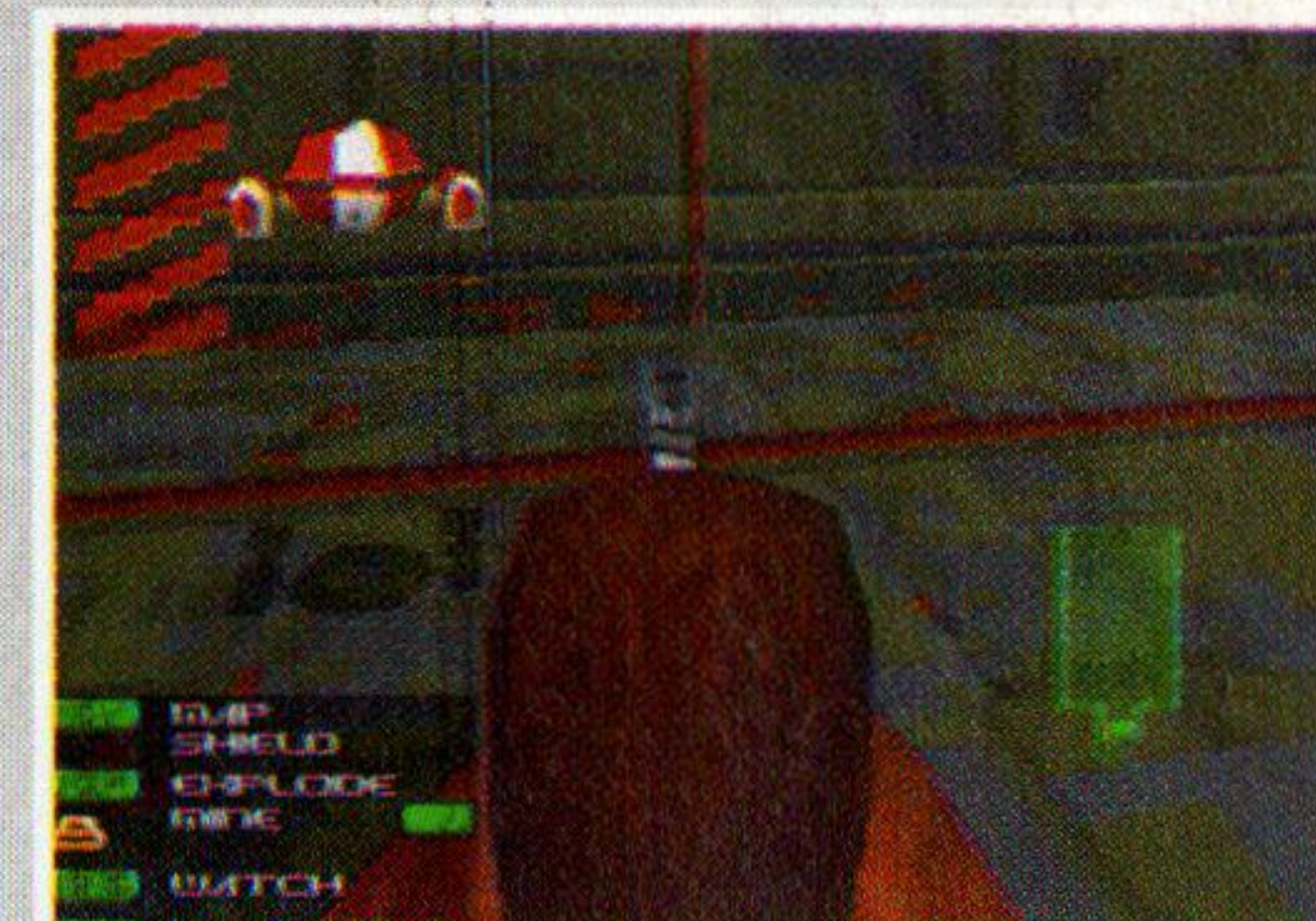
Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Electronic Arts** Developer: **Delphine Software** Style: **3D Action Adventure**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

Before *Tomb Raider*, the third-person action/adventure genre was pretty bleak, but *Fade to Black* was one of the first games that successfully mastered it. The sequel to *Flashback* (a 2D platform/adventure, similar to *Heart of Darkness* or the two Abe games) continues the story from where it was left off. The hero of the first game, Conrad, has been drifting through space searching for earth, but his enemies (the Morphs) find him and take him prisoner. On the alien home world you manage to escape and become the key player in an attempt to thwart an alien invasion.

The game's plot takes many twists and turns and is packed with well-thought out puzzles and plenty of action. Despite being very technically impressive when it was released on the PC, the game has not aged or converted well; the advancements in the genre on the PlayStation show. It is a very playable game, though, and even if it has been outclassed by *Tomb Raider*, it's still strongly recommended for sci-fi fans or those of you who are getting tired of Lara Croft.

Will

VERDICT: **65%**



DIE HARD TRILOGY



Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Fox Interactive** Developer: **Probe** Style: **Arcade Sim**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£19.99** Players: **One** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

I know some people really hate this game, but it has always been one of my favourites. You get a real bargain with this one, because you are actually getting three games in one. First you have a third-person maze-running game, based on the first Die Hard movie, where you have to find a bomb hidden somewhere in an office building, while fighting hordes of terrorists and freeing hostages, all against the clock.

The second part of the game, based on the movie Die Harder, is a light-gun game set in and around JFK international airport, and on several aircraft. Again you are fighting terrorists, dispatching them with a wide range of different weapons. This is one of my favourite target shooting games on the

PlayStation, better than *Time Crisis* in my opinion.

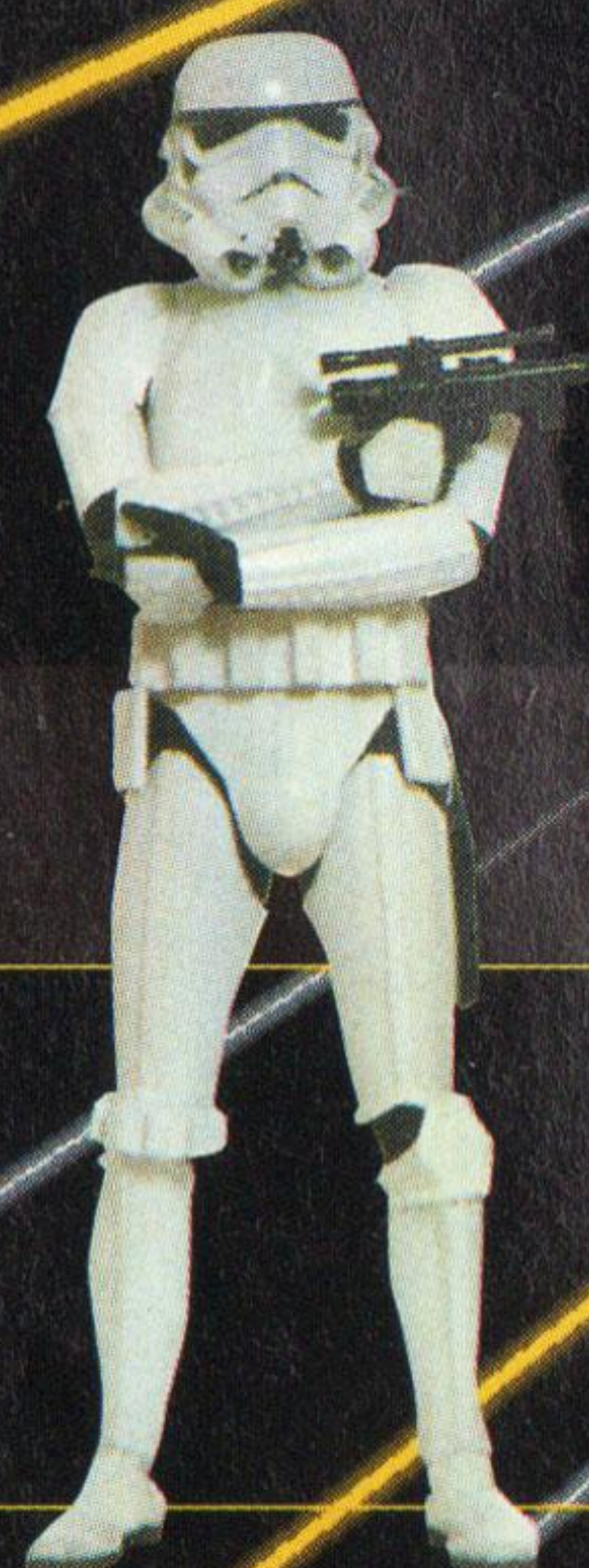
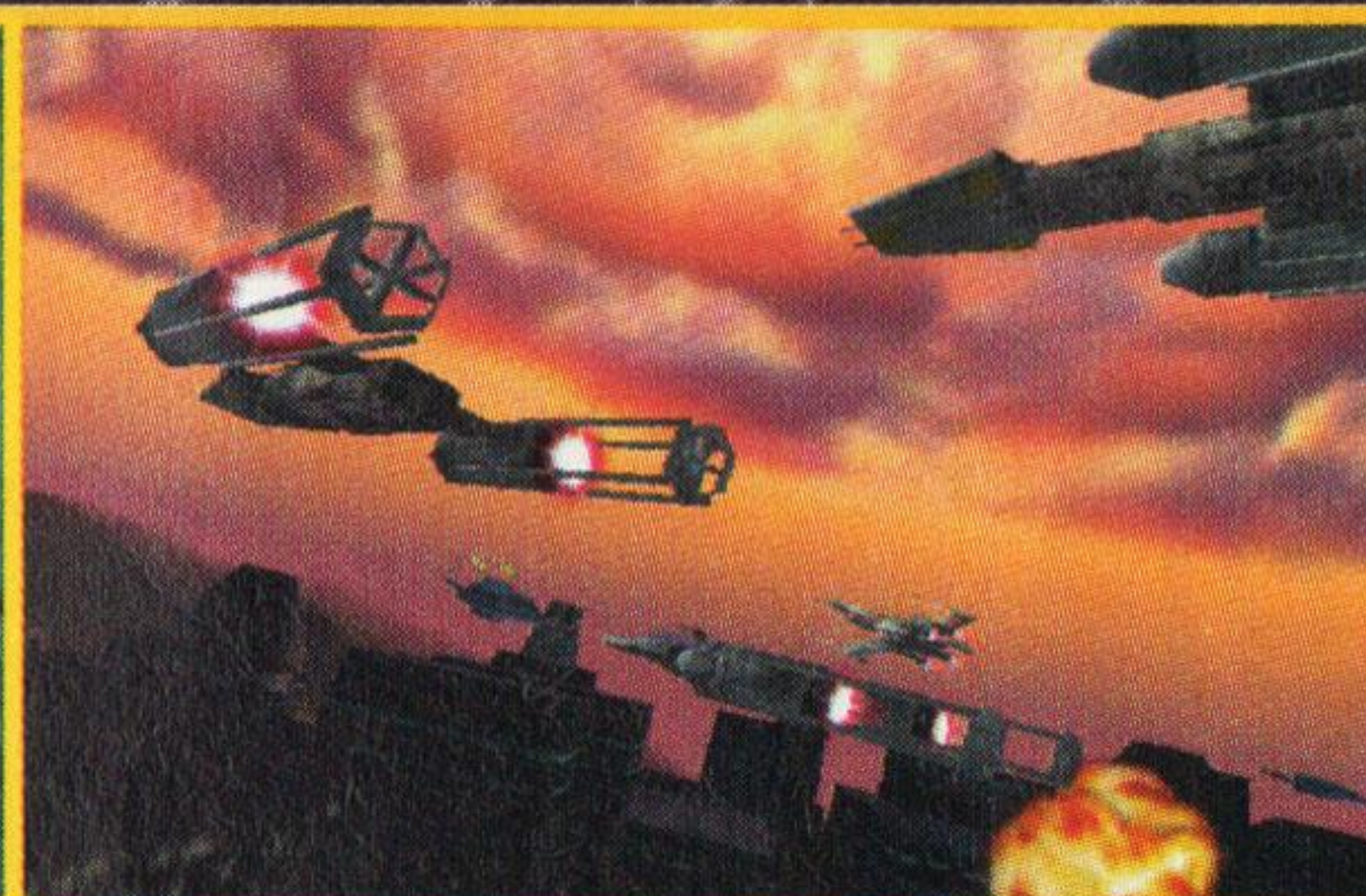
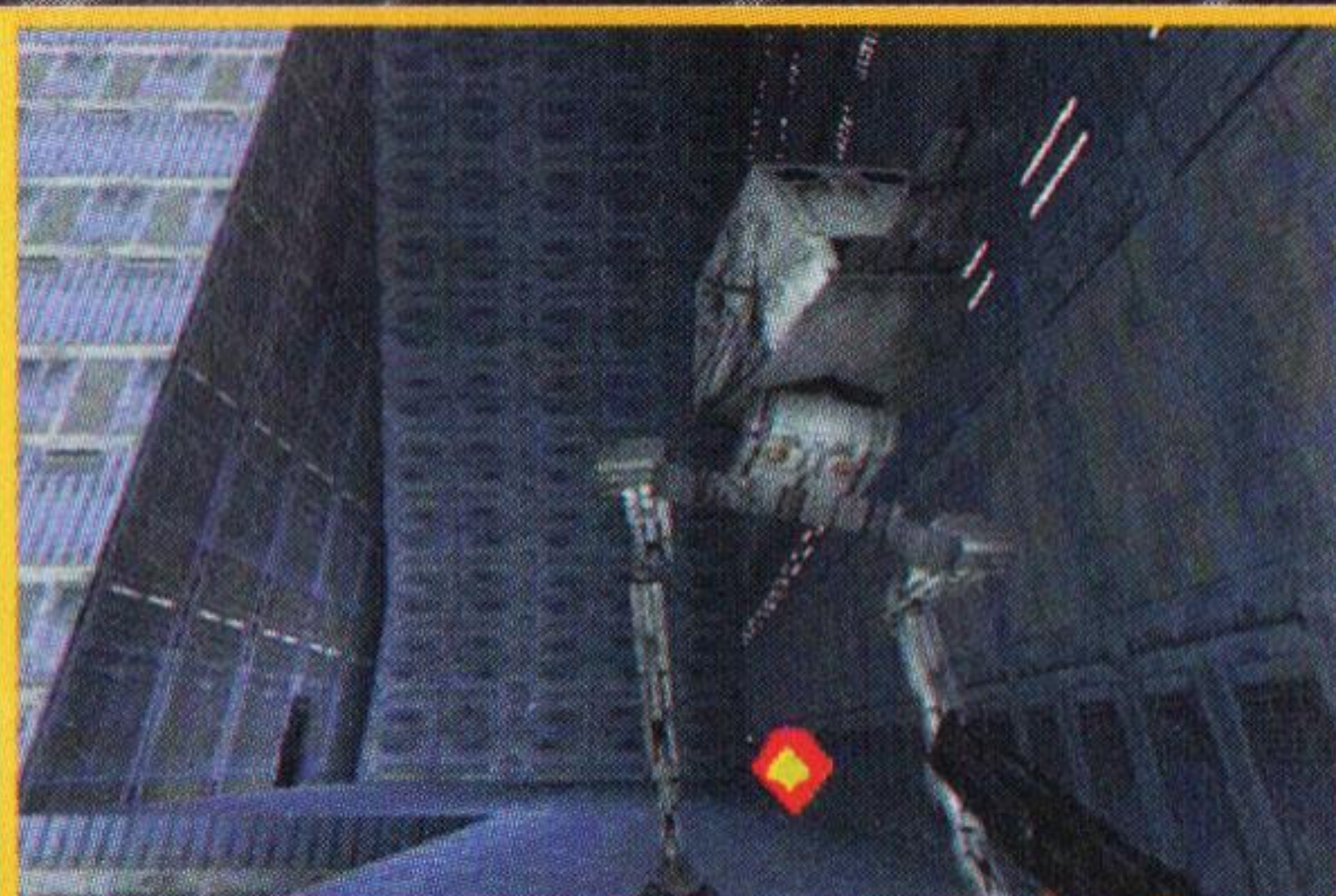
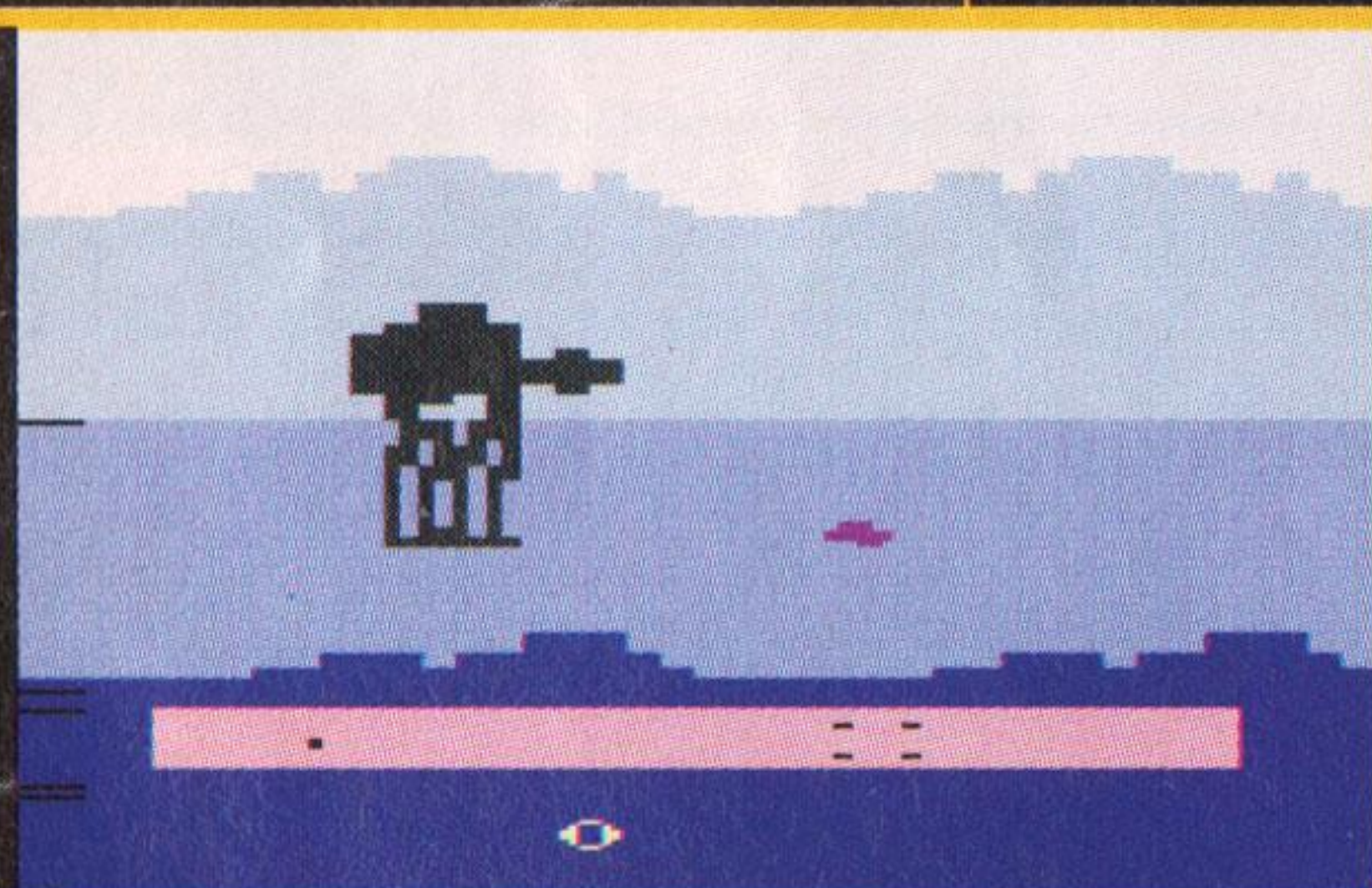
The third game on the disk is a driving game based on the frantic dash through New York from the third Die Hard movie, Die Hard With a Vengeance. This game is also against the clock, as you have to locate a series of bombs while dealing with traffic, pedestrians and the New York road system. One highlight is that when you 'accidentally' run over a pedestrian, the wipers come on to wipe the blood from the windscreen. Brutal, but amusing. All three games are very difficult, but this last one is all but impossible, and is one of the reasons why some people don't like the game. If you have a light gun and fancy a challenge, go for it.

Cliff

VERDICT: **70%**

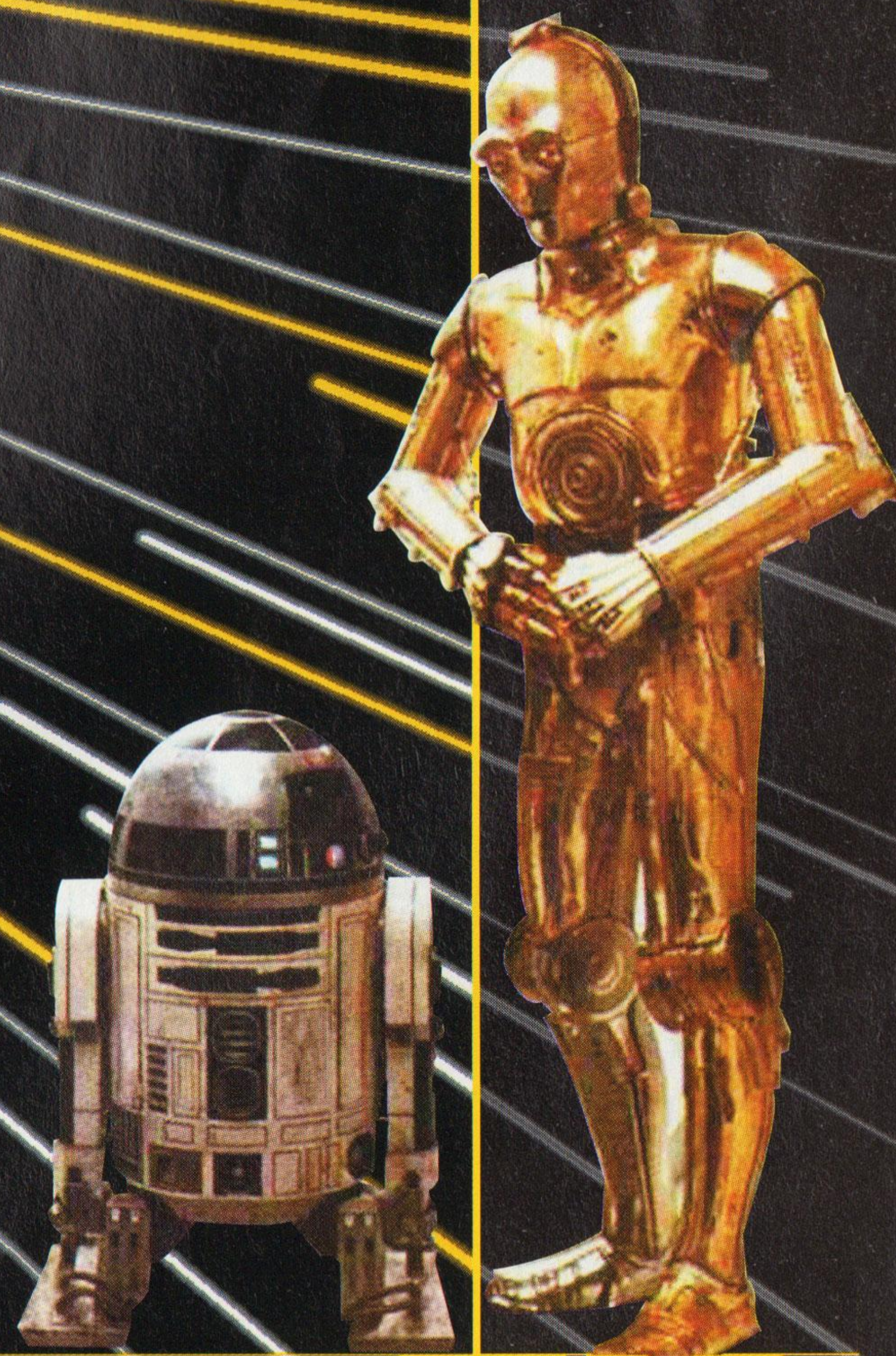


THE HISTORY OF STAR WARS



GAMES

Star Wars games have been around almost as long as the **games industry** itself. **Total CONTROL** decided there was a story there somewhere – and **stone Yoda**, we were right. **Bringing you the tale is Rebel leader**, Keith Pullin...



STAR WARS



Video and computer games have attempted to simulate and expand upon George Lucas' Star Wars universe for the last sixteen years. Since Atari's arcade cabinet first appeared in 1983, more than 50 (yes, fifty!) Star Wars related games have appeared in various guises, ranging from 3D shoot-'em-ups to pseudo-chess conversions. That's a staggering amount, and a major contributing factor in bringing the exploits of Luke, Leia, Han, Chewie and co. to a newer, richer generation. Would Star Wars be as popular today without this omnipresent games production line to remind us all of that galaxy far, far away? Probably not.

Star Wars games are an indication of the state of the software industry itself. Should an 'outsider' want to assess the current state of interactive games technology, they need look no further than the newest Star Wars releases. Look at *Force Commander* and *X-Wing Alliance* on the PC – graphics don't come much better. But more on that later...

"Back in my day..."

In 1983, Simon Le Bon bore the look of blow-dried Ewok, Nick Kershaw looked like a homeless Wookiee, and Tina Turner looked dangerous. It was also the year Atari released the first Star Wars arcade game. Unlike most games of the time, the Star Wars arcade cabinet and monitor could be used for nothing else other than the game it was meant for due to its revolutionary 3D vector line-graphics. When viewed alongside the dowdy likes of *Spy Hunter* and *Phoenix*, *Star Wars* looked truly sensational – Atari were onto a winner. And then a strange thing happened...

In 1984 they followed *Star Wars* with *Return of the Jedi*. Aside from the obvious fact that it was released before *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Jedi* was also nothing like the first Star

Wars game. What were Atari playing at? Instead, we were treated to an isometric approach similar to *Zaxxon*, featuring speeder bikes in the Forest of Endor and death-defying Millennium Falcon rides. Luckily for Atari, it was good. Ten pence pieces were easily lured from our grasp – but where the hell was Empire?

Well, Atari badly wanted to cash in on the release of *Jedi*, which had just hit cinemas, and had apparently decided to skip *Empire*. But had they? Of course not.

In a move of dubious virtue, Atari released a chip set which could be slotted into the back of the original *Star Wars* cabinet to magically transform it into *The Empire Strikes Back*. Minimum cost, minimum fuss, maximum revenue. Atari were back to the adrenaline pumping 3D shoot-'em-up format everybody loved, and now they had three Star Wars arcade games while the film hype was still hot. Very clever. Very clever indeed...

You can still find all three machines if you scour the country long and hard enough, but whether it's still safe to sit in front of that monitor when the Death Star explodes is another matter...

Star Wars is coming home

While the Star Wars arcade cabinets conquered the piers and seaside arcades of Britain, Atari's erstwhile VCS console was conquering homes. A total of five Star Wars games were released by Parker Brothers, who, amongst other things, were also responsible for classics like *Q*Bert* and *Frogger*. They also conceived the highly alternative *Strawberry Shortcake: Musical Match-ups*, but that's another story entirely.

In reality, between 1982 and 1984 Parker Bros. monopolised Star Wars games development in the same way

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY ARCADE...

Star Wars, original arcade version by Atari Inc., 1983.

The Star Wars arcade game boasted many revolutionary features. The state-of-the-art 3D vector engine was converted from a two year old unfinished project called *Warp-Speed*. The flight stick was designed by modifying the controller used in the military version of *Battlezone*. And on top of that, it was the first Atari game to produce speech, and although it sounds slightly mechanical, all the samples were lifted directly from the film soundtrack. Another first was the use of four 'Pokey' chips (sixteen independent voices in total) to simulate the symphonic acoustics. The game itself was fairly straightforward: The first level catapulted the player into a spectacular space battle against imperial TIE Fighters. The second stage saw the X-Wing down on the surface of the Death Star, which was covered with laser bunkers and towers. The third and final stage took 'Red-5' down into the Death Star trench, where the ultimate goal was to shoot a proton torpedo into the exhaust port to destroy the Death Star itself – "just like Beggar's Canyon back home..." Historic rating: 7/10 – Still one helluva rush!

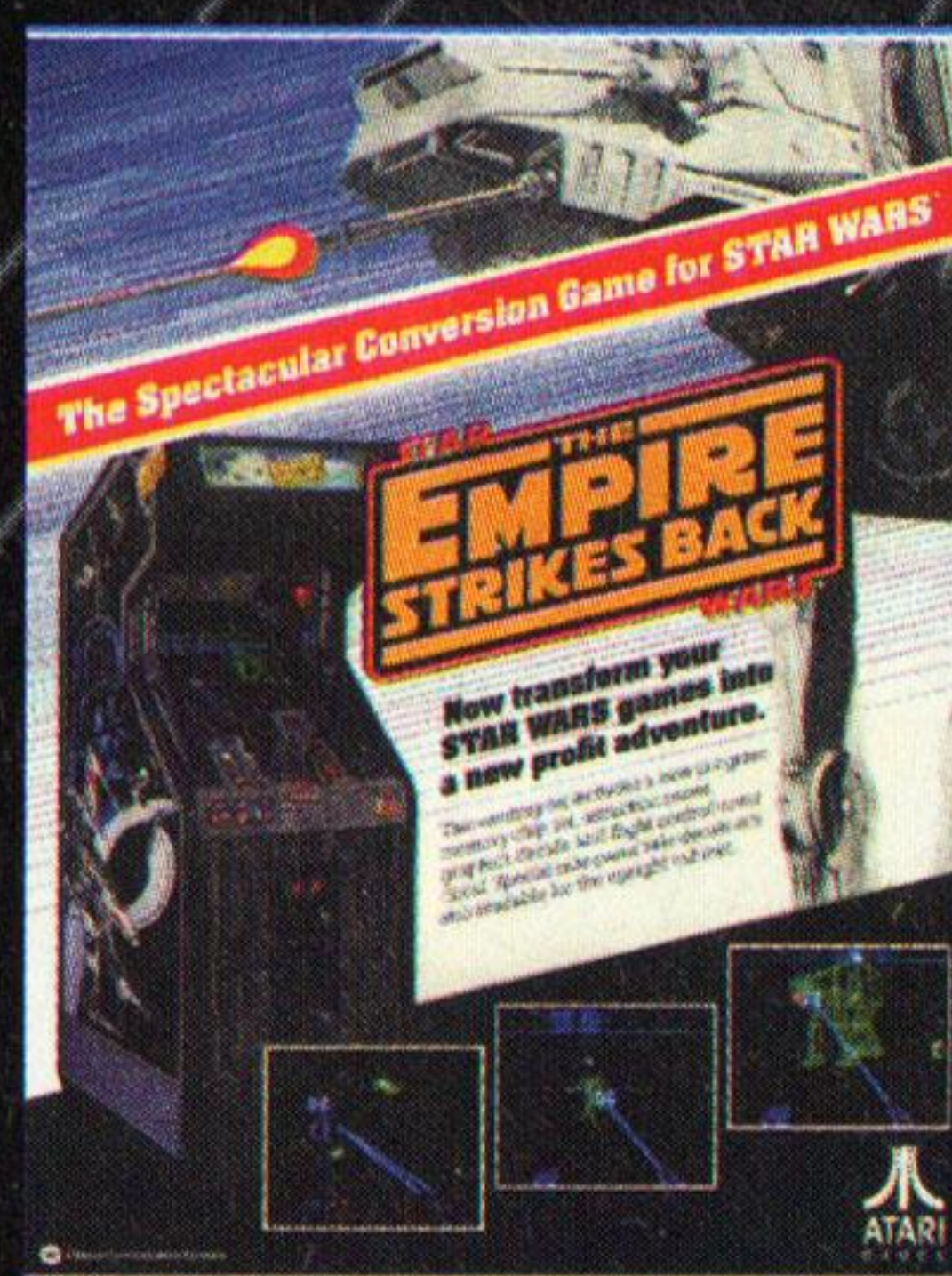


The Empire Strikes Back, original arcade version by Atari Inc., 1985.

Grab a few new chips, shove them in the back of the original Star Wars arcade machine and what have you got? *The Empire Strikes Back*. Atari certainly didn't over elaborate when it came to knocking this one out.

The first stage saw the player soaring over the terrain of Hoth in a Snowspeeder shooting down Probots and transmission signals. After that came the stomping Imperial Walkers and Scout Walkers, and finally we were whisked away into space to take on a wave of TIE Fighters in the Millennium Falcon. But wait. What's this? There's more? Yes, *The Empire Strikes Back* had a whopping great four stages, with the real final stage being the Millennium Falcon's roller coaster ride through an asteroid belt. Hmm. Bit of an anti-climax then? Well yes, but still worth playing, if only to fly through the legs of the Imperial Walkers on stage 2.

Historic Rating: 7/10 – Slightly more variation than the first, but generally more of the same.



Return of the Jedi, original arcade version by Atari Inc., 1984.

Return of the Jedi was released before *The Empire Strikes Back*, and represented a marked contrast. Instead of blasting away at wiry polygons, *ROTJ*'s engine was based on the more traditional shooter called *Zaxxon*. The player viewed the action from an isometric perspective and controlled one of three different craft, namely a Speeder Bike on the first stage, the Millennium Falcon on the second and an AT-ST Walker at the end.

Winding through the trees of Endor on the Speeder Bike was strangely compelling, Han Solo's cries of "I'm going in!" were unforgettable, and rumbling around in an Imperial Walker lent a well-needed bit of firepower to proceedings. It was certainly spectacular, but it was also very difficult, and there were only three stages.

Historic rating: 7/10 – Challenging and atmospheric, but nowhere near enough levels.

This is one of the actual posters used to sell *The Empire Strikes Back* chip set to arcade owners

LucasArts do today. Not only did they swamp the VCS and subsequent Atari 2600/5200 with a plethora of titles, they even managed to release *Star Wars: The Arcade Game* for Coleco's Colecovision console, and *The Empire Strikes Back* on Mattel's Intellivision.

The first 8-Bit Nintendo's also started appearing at this point, but there was no place for *Star Wars* in the unfashionable grey box from Japan. The closest it came was an add-on robot called *R.O.B.* Looking like a giant Swiss army knife with all its blades out, this little guy was supposed to play against you in the same way a mate would, but C3PO it most definitely was not. Nintendo's time had not yet come...

As prolific and successful as they were, Parker Brothers succumbed to the infamous video game crash of 1984 – but they weren't the only ones. The market collapse, caused by the advent of home computers like the Sinclair ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64, annihilated virtually any company associated with home console games.

Atari survived, as we know, but have never quite managed to dominate like they did from 1976 to 1984. Still, it's their legacy that prospers today; Atari were the true pioneers of home interactive entertainment. They convinced the world to interact with their television, they changed home entertainment forever, and a lot of that success was down to their *Star Wars* ties.

A new hope

The *Star Wars* licence was about to enter a new era. Atari tried to claw their way back to respectability with the Atari 400/800/XL series of home computers, and quick versions of both *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* helped convey the illusion that Atari could still mix with the best of them, but

it wasn't to be. More significant was the 1985 Commodore 64 version of *Star Wars*; this was the closest anybody had yet come to duplicating the arcade version. Here was a game that was virtually identical. Okay, you never got the 16 channel symphonic sound of the original, but it was still damn good.

However, Sinclair Spectrum owners weren't happy. Where was their version? Atari weren't interested. They concentrated instead on releasing *The Empire Strikes Back* for the C64, and duly did so. Spectrum owners seethed, but in 1987 the wait ended courtesy of *Vektor Gafix* – *Star Wars* had finally made it onto Clive Sinclair's rubber-keyed wonder. Domark published it under license from Atari, and the game was greeted rapturously. A year later, the same talented bunch of individuals came up with *The Empire Strikes Back*. Yet again, it was a near perfect conversion of the arcade game. The only bad point was David Whittaker's music, which farted along ominously. Bless.

In 1988, Atari ST conversions of all three arcade games followed in quick succession. To be fair, by then everybody had seen it all before, and considering most ST owners had upgraded from either a Spectrum or Commodore anyway, there was really nothing to shout about. The arcade conversions had been done to death, and there were better 3D shooters around. It was time to move on – a new approach was needed. LucasFilm, too, decided that the fate of the new rebellion should rest in their hands...

The console strikes back

In the helter-skelter world of the interactive games industry, fortunes were about to change yet again. Oddly, in Japan, Nintendo's NES system (or Famicom as it is known in Japan) had gone from strength to strength since the 1984 crash. The Japanese, it seems, never fell for that home computer 'fad', and

CONSOLE YOURSELF, DEAR BOY

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back (Atari VCS/2600) – Parker Bros., 1983

Drawing inspiration from *Defender*, this erstwhile quick-fingered shoot-'em-up had you flying around in your Snowspeeder, knocking off as many AT-ATs as possible. When it came to looks, this blotchy baby was in desperate need of a plastic surgeon, but at least you could work out what everything was meant to be – as you can today.

With that in mind, this remains a classic Atari console game, and is still popular with video game 'cults' today.

Historic Rating: 9/10 – Ooh baby! What beautiful legs you have...

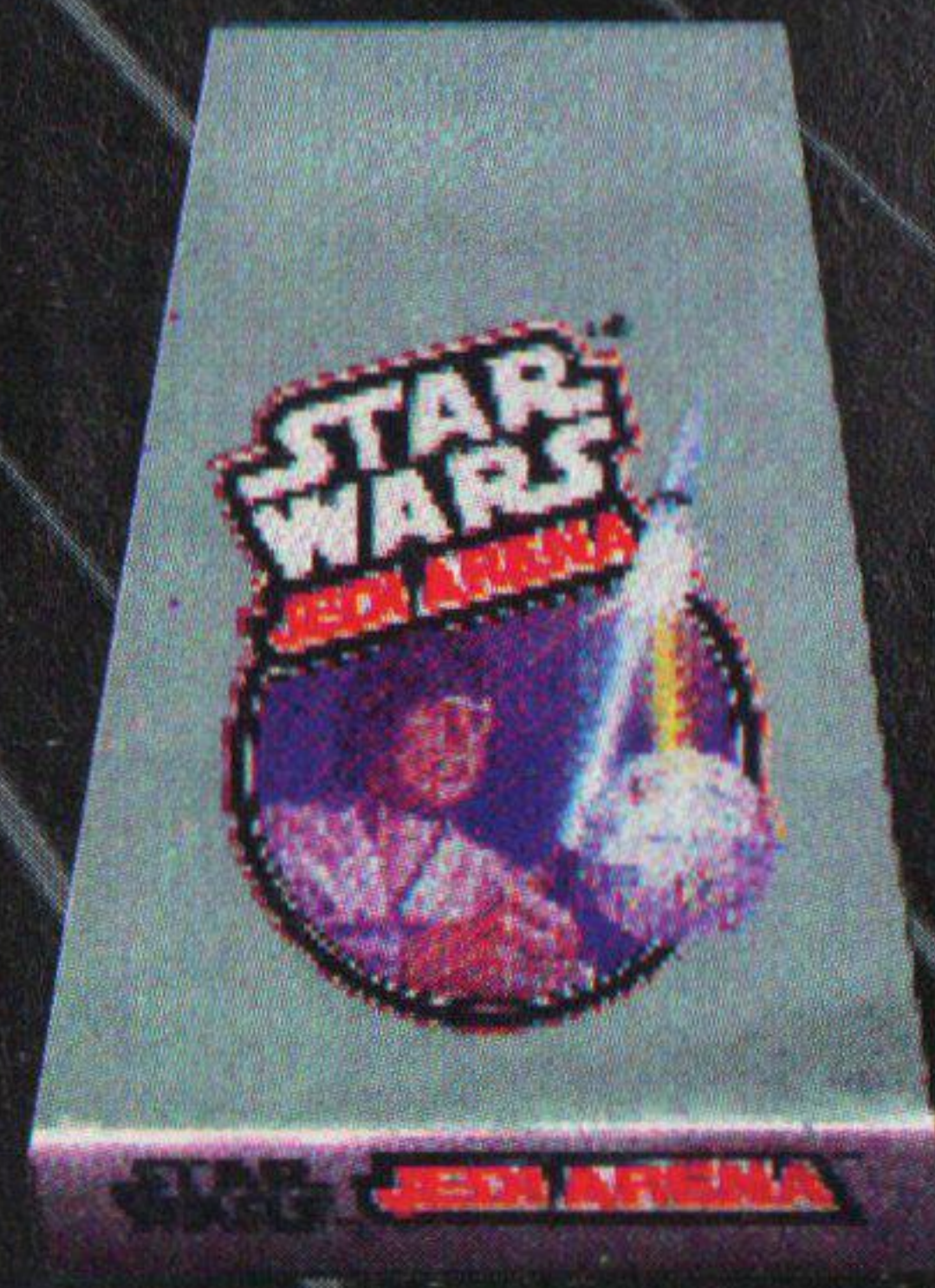


Star Wars: Jedi Arena, (Atari VCS/2600) – Parker Bros., 1984

Do you remember in *Star Wars* when Luke does his lightsabre training, and he has to defend himself from a floating ball? Well, this is the video game version – kind of. The aim is to send a bolt of electricity through your opponent's shield by directing it with the paddle controller. Unfortunately your opponent is trying to do the same, so in true Jedi fashion you have to beat the offending article away with your trusty lightsabre.

Ultimately, *Jedi Arena* is another ultra-difficult *Star Wars* game. Definitely one for the Jedi Masters, and maybe one for the money masters too, as it's actually quite rare. Owning a boxed copy in good condition could even net you a few bob...

Historic Rating: 6/10 – *Jedi Arena* anybody?



Use the force, use the force, use the force...
Oh, I give up...

THE COMPLETE SOFTOGRAPHY – AT A GLANCE...

After days of back breaking research, the definitive list of *Star Wars* games has been created. Cast your eyes down this list and witness history...

1977

Star Wars
(Film)

1979

The Empire Strikes Back
(Film)

1982

Star Wars: Jedi Arena
(Atari VCS/2600)
Parker Bros

1983

The Return of the Jedi
(Film)

Star Wars
(Arcade)
Atari

Return of the Jedi: Death Star Battle

(Atari VCS/2600/5200)
Parker Bros

Return of the Jedi:

Ewok Adventure
(Atari VCS/2600)
Parker Bros

The Empire Strikes Back
(Atari VCS/2600/Intellivision)
Parker Bros

1984

The Return of the Jedi
(Arcade)
Atari

Star Wars:
The Arcade Game
(Atari VCS/2600/5200/
Colecovision)
Parker Bros

Star Wars
(Commodore 64)
LPL/Atari

1985

The Empire Strikes Back
(Arcade)
Atari

Empire Strikes Back
(Commodore 64)
LPL/Atari

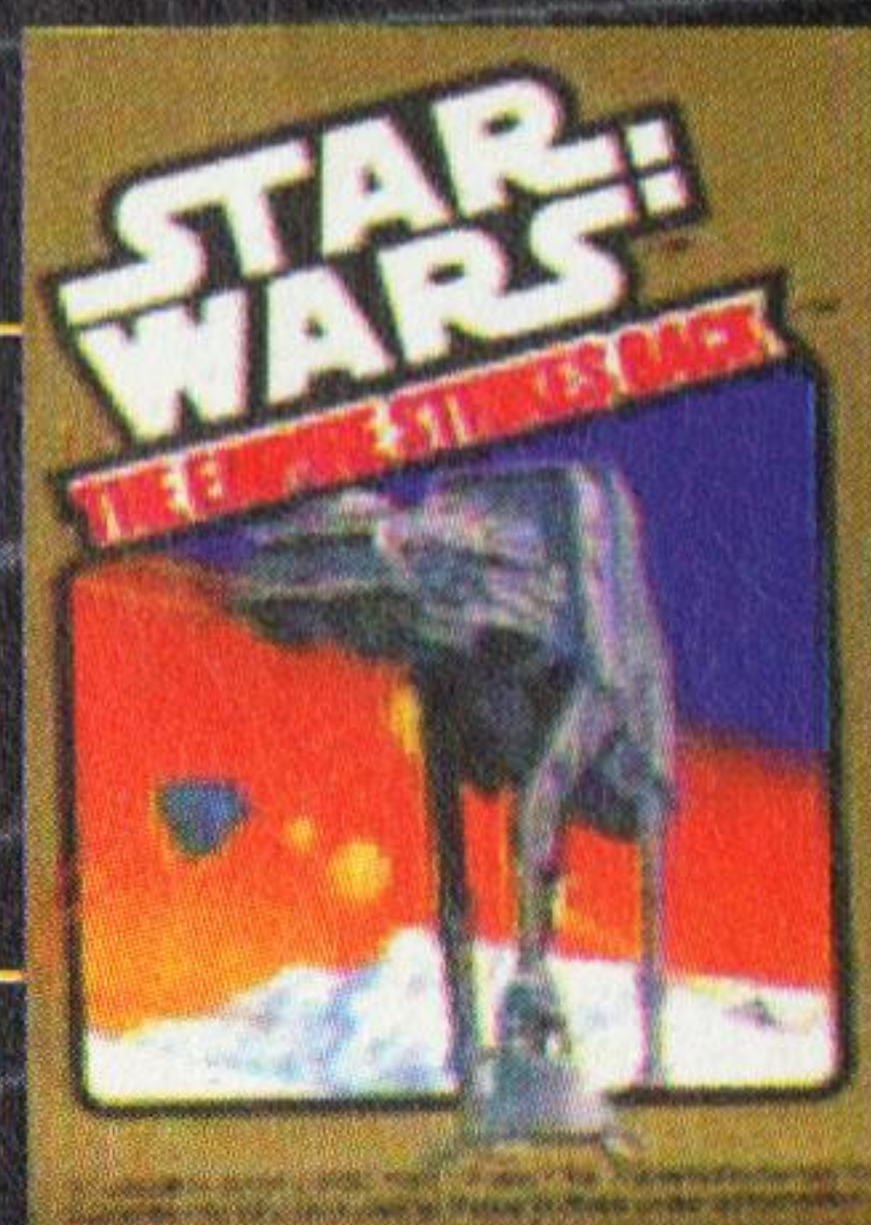
BOXING CLEVER

Any of these old boxes look familiar? Got a few lurking under the stairs? If so, go and get them valued immediately. In fact, why not try and swap Intellivision's *The Empire Strikes Back* for *Rogue Squadron* on the N64? Go on – I dare you.

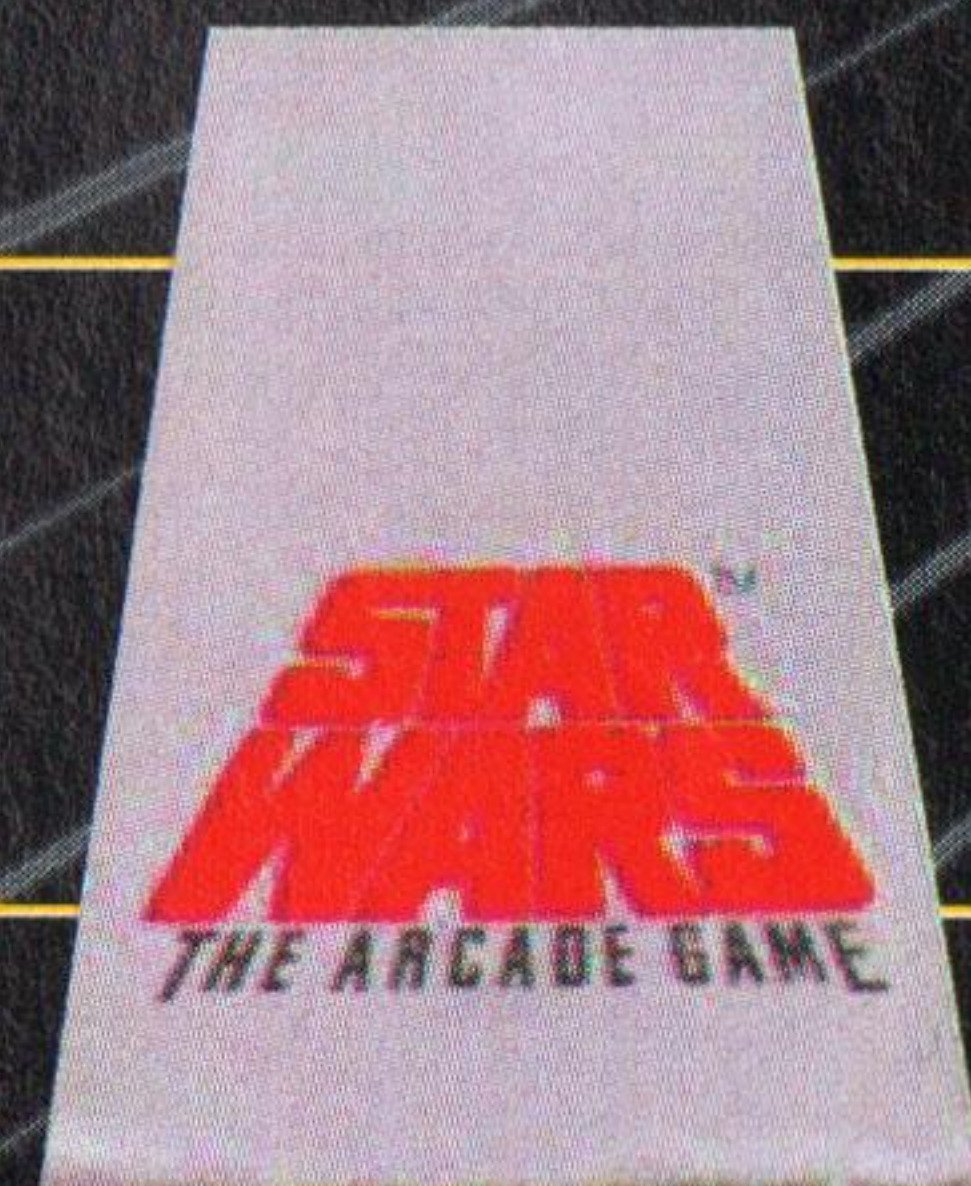
Year: 1983
Name: Return of the Jedi: Death Star Battle
Format: Atari 2600
By: Parker Brothers
Availability: Rare



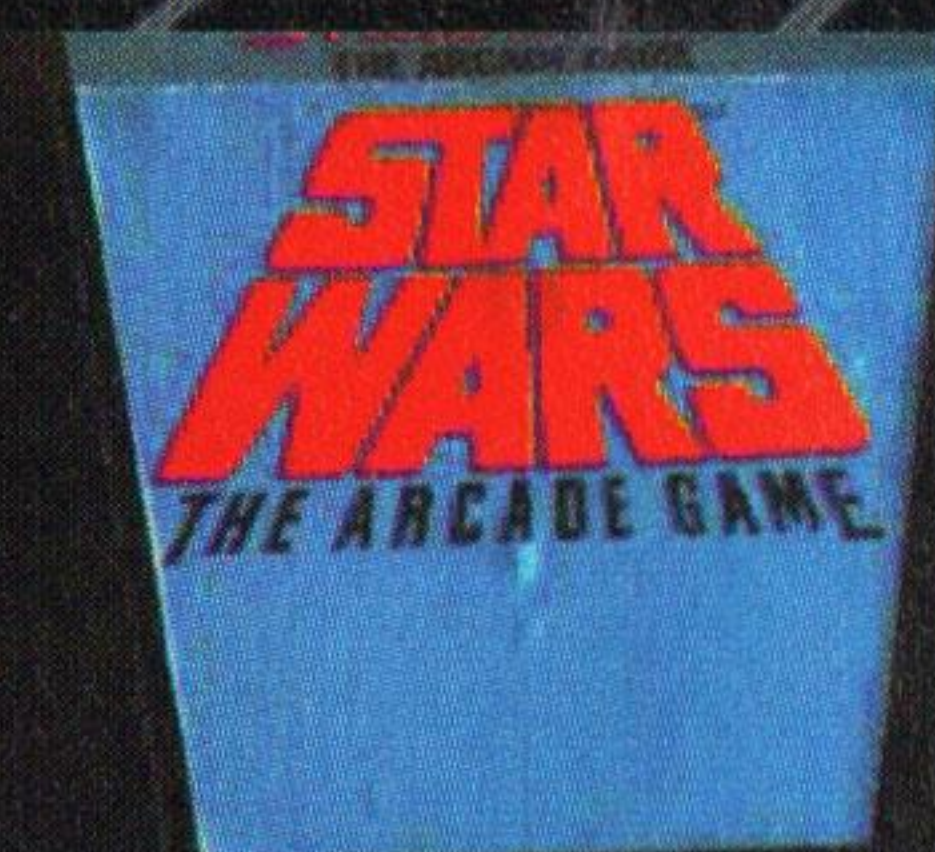
Year: 1983
Game: Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back
Format: Intellivision
By: Parker Brothers
Availability: Quite rare



Year: 1984
Game: Star Wars: The Arcade Game
Format: Atari 2600
By: Parker Brothers
Availability: Very rare



Year: 1985
Game: Star Wars: The Arcade Game
Format: Atari 5200
By: Parker Brothers
Availability: Rare



Year: 1983
Game: Return of the Jedi: Ewok Adventure
Format: Atari 2600
By: Parker Brothers
Availability: Unbelievably rare



while the UK and American markets tossed, turned, fretted, and then mourned the death of various computers (due in no small part to severe piracy), the Japanese forged ahead with consoles and improved upon them in true bionic man style. Inevitably, in 1990 consoles re-emerged in the UK, and with them, a reinvigorated wave of Star Wars titles.

First was *Star Wars* on the NES. Designed and developed by LucasFilm Games, programmed by Beam Software and published by JVC (with Nintendo retaining overall rights), it was the first Star Wars game for six years that wasn't an arcade conversion. As it happens it was a pretty good platformer – zingy sound effects, challenging gameplay, loads of characters, and a fantastic speeder section on the surface of Tatooine. This was just what the doctor ordered. Shortly after, a painfully difficult version of *The Empire Strikes Back* was released through the same convoluted licensing channels, and once again a myriad of characters assailed the player's senses. A token Sega Master System version of *Star Wars* also appeared, but it never received the same acclaim as the NES duo.

In 1992, Gameboy versions of *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* made it possible to fit Princess Leia into your trouser pocket. How both games managed to scythe their way through the bureaucratic red tape thrust before them is a mystery to this day; make sense of the following if you dare: Both were developed by NMS Software Ltd as a UbiSoft production under license from LucasArts Entertainment Ltd and licensed by Nintendo. Everyone was after their slice of pie, and considering both games were basically direct conversions of the NES games, it was probably easy money for all involved. Surprisingly, they weren't bad games.

The final Star Wars game on the Gameboy – *Super Return of the Jedi* – was developed by Black Pearl Software and published by THQ. Why new developers were chosen is unknown. Whatever the reason, they produced a game virtually identical to the first two anyway. Still that was the way of the 'Boy – platform game, after platform game, after platform game... Oh, and *Tetris*.

In 1993 the Super NES played host to what is arguably the finest trilogy of games on any console or computer ever. *Super Star Wars*, *Super Empire Strikes Back* and *Super Return of the Jedi* were masterful platform creations. Admittedly, if you've played your way through the first two, *Jedi* can be a little repetitive. Still, they were consistent, and like the films, all three were compulsive entertainment from start to finish. The trilogy proved to be JVC's finest hour. Alas, it also proved to be the last Star Wars games published under their banner.

The return of the computer

1993 was a landmark year for the games industry. For the first time in history, consoles and computers seemed to be living peacefully together. LucasFilm became LucasArts, and they began to take a firm grasp of their own destiny. And, for the first time ever, Sega also started to receive a share of the Star Wars licence with *Star Wars: The Arcade Game*, *Rebel Assault* and *Star Wars: Chess* all arriving on the Sega 32X, with the latter two even appearing on 32X CD.

Star Wars: Chess remains one of the most ill-conceived game concepts of all-time – effectively it was normal chess, but with Star Wars characters. Chewie moves A4 to C4 and takes Leia from behind – all that... *Rebel Assault* was a spooled arcade shoot-'em-up, which in truth was little more than a couple of hours of vaguely interactive FMV. Even so, 3DO got the Rebel treatment too.

Then the PC games market exploded. With Virgin Interactive as UK publishers, LucasArts got their act well and truly together. *X-Wing* (by Totally Games) appeared, then the stubborn *Rebel Assault*, and in 1994 the floodgates opened – *TIE Fighter*, *Dark Forces*, *Rebel Assault II*, *Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight*, *Shadows*

of the Empire, X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter, Yoda Stories, Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith, and finally Rebellion last year. It's almost as if LucasArts had some kind of contractual obligation to release 'X' amount of titles before the new film...

Not-so-distant stars

Nowadays the PlayStation also has its fair share of the Star Wars pie, boasting *Dark Forces*, *Masters of Tera Kasi* and *Rebel Assault II*, while the N64 gets in on the action with *Shadows of the Empire*. Never before has such a rich vein of Star Wars games been available, and as far as the future is concerned, things are looking pretty rosy. Current PC publishers Activision will be responsible for *Star Wars: Force Commander* and *Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance*, and THE will guide *Rogue Squadron* on the N64.

Whether we'll be treated to another sixteen years of Star Wars games is hard to say. It might actually be quite nice to get out of the house and communicate with real humans for a change. Alternatively, with the ongoing construction of the Earth's own International Space Station, it might not be long before we find our own Death Stars and Ewoks. Space is infinite after all, and with infinity comes infinite possibilities. Pure fantasy? Of course. But that, my friend, is what it's all about...

STAR WARS ON THE INTERNET

Star Wars with the Gipper

For a very, very silly bit of Star Wars nonsense, point your browser this way:

www.galcit.caltech.edu/~doug/computer/java/sdi/sdi.html

Star Wars RPGs on the Net

Some people like to spend their lives in state of denial, shunning anything to do with reality. When such an urge overwhelms you, pop along to this site.

www.roleplayinggames.net/starwars/index.html

Official Star Wars Website

Want to know about the first three films? Want to see a trailer for the new film? All your dreams will come true at:

www.starwars.com

Official LucasArts Website

For more information on any of LucasArts Star Wars products, nip along to this very entertaining haven of hope.

www.lucasarts.com

1986

Star Wars

(Atari 400/800/XL)

Atari

The Empire Strikes Back

(Atari 400/800/XL)

Atari

Star Wars

(Spectrum 48k)

Domark

1987

The Empire Strikes Back

(Spectrum 48k/128k)

Domark

1988

Star Wars

(Atari ST)

Domark/Atari

The Empire Strikes Back

(Atari ST)

Domark/Atari

1989

Return of the Jedi

(Atari ST)

Domark/Atari

1990

Star Wars

(Sega Master System)

Sega/Atari

1991

Star Wars

(NES)

JVC/Nintendo

The Empire Strikes Back

(NES)

JVC/Nintendo

1992

Star Wars

(Game Boy)

Ubisoft/Nintendo

The Empire Strikes Back

(Game Boy)

Ubisoft/Nintendo

1993

Super Star Wars

(Super NES)

JVC/Nintendo

Super Empire Strikes Back

(Super NES)

JVC/Nintendo

X-Wing

(PC/Macintosh)

LucasArts

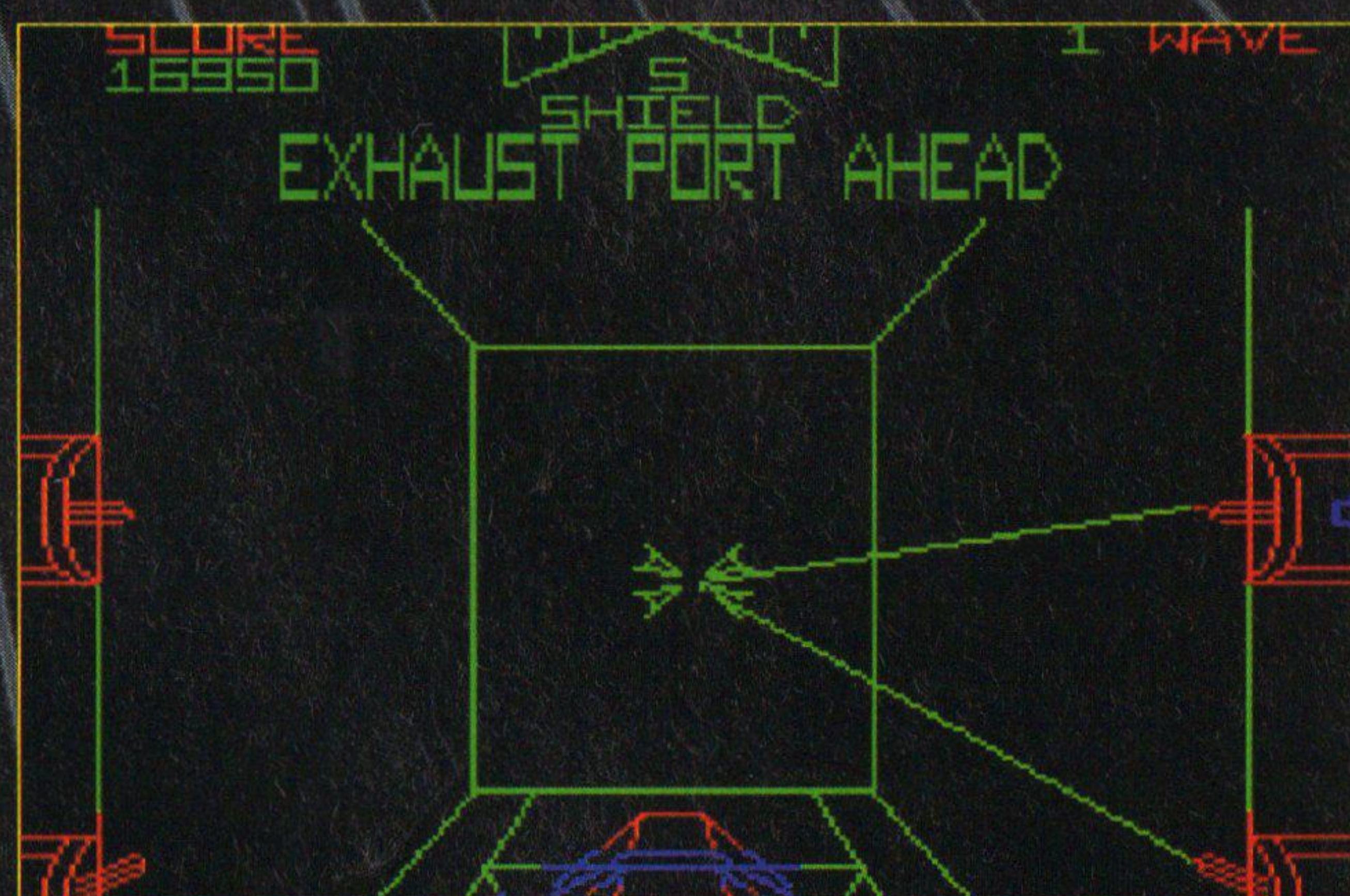
B-Wing

(PC)



C64 VS SPECTRUM

Commodore and Sinclair's bitter struggle for market supremacy was another classic "Good Vs Evil" battle. It was fitting then, that these two Goliaths of the home computing world should go head to head with Star Wars arcade conversions, and most satisfying when C64 owners faces dropped like medicine balls when they saw what delights the good old Speccy had coughed up.



The Spectrum didn't need any force to help it along... Unlike the Sinclair C5, which needed loads





NINTENDO CRESCENDO

There have been a total of ten Star Wars games across the four Nintendo consoles released in the UK, and there's not a stinker in the house. True, there have been some painfully difficult ones like *The Empire Strikes Back* on the NES, and some visually disturbed ones too, like well, *The Empire Strikes Back* on the Game Boy, but certainly nothing dire. Oddly enough, the least pleasing of all the Nintendo collection is *Shadows of the Empire* – the most recent release. Whether *Rogue Squadron* nips that particular lull in the bud is something we'll find out shortly. Don't hold your breath though. You'll die.

Star Wars (JVC) - NES, 1991

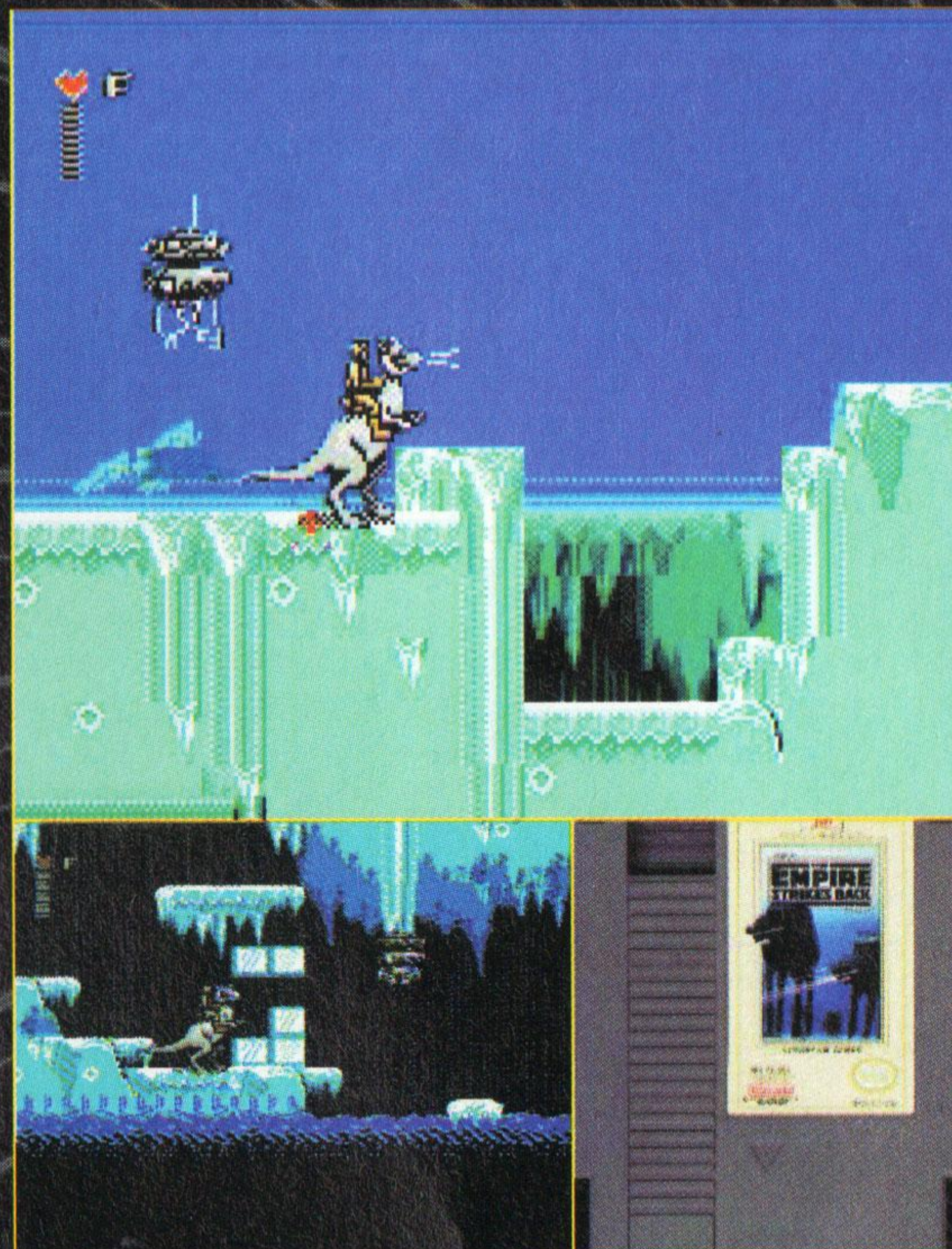
There were quite a few platform games out for the NES at this time, so it was often difficult to get noticed. Thankfully NES *Star Wars* was one of those games that did manage to stand out, and with some great ideas, it proved to be a worthy pursuit on a rainy day. **Overall: 7/10**



The Empire Strikes Back (JVC) - NES, 1991

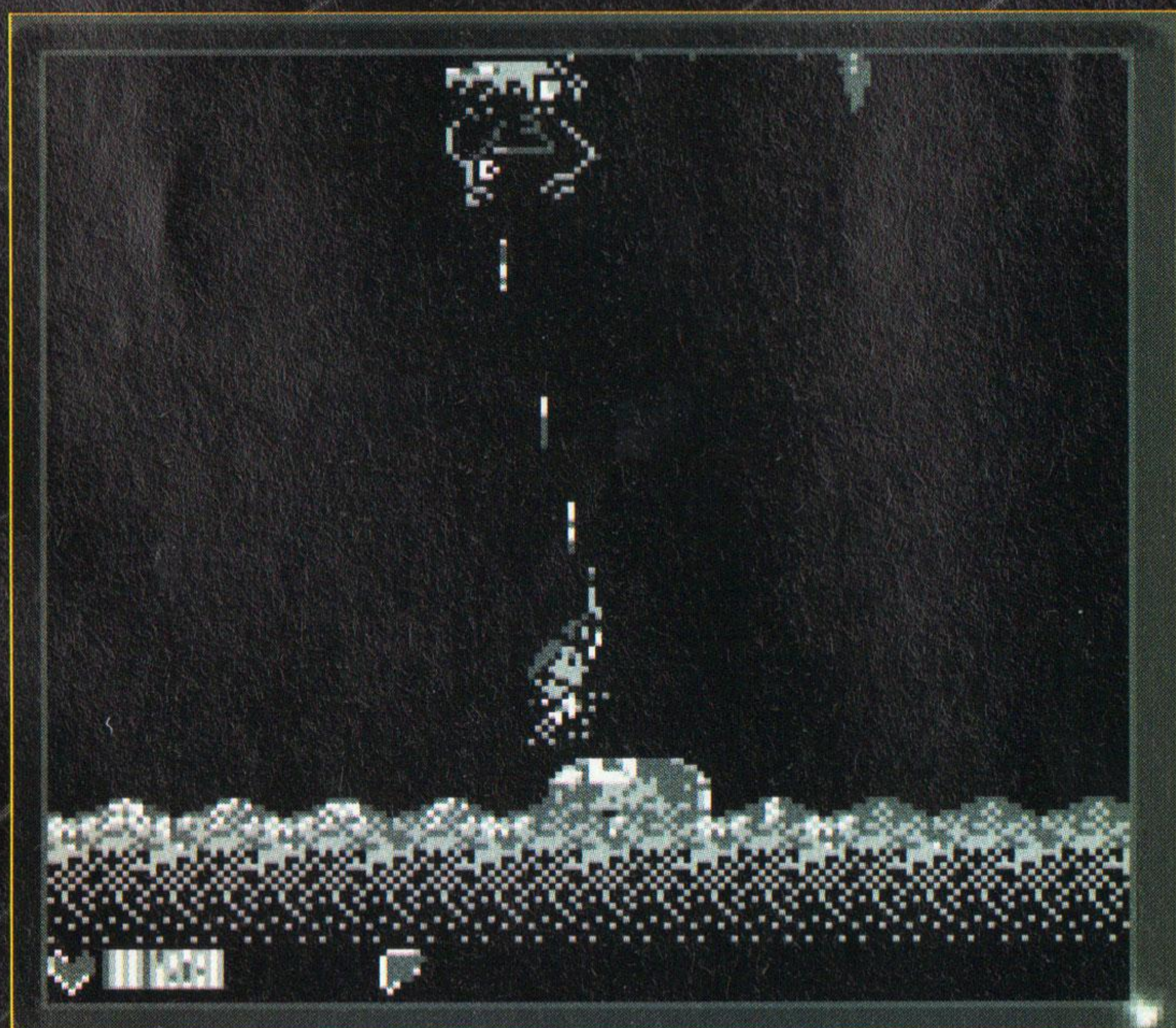
Could this game be any harder? The NES version of *ESB* was one of the cruellest platform games of all time, though it did boast a rather canny side-scrolling flying section where you had to trip AT-ATs with tow-ropes. All in all – difficult, but good.

Overall: 7/10



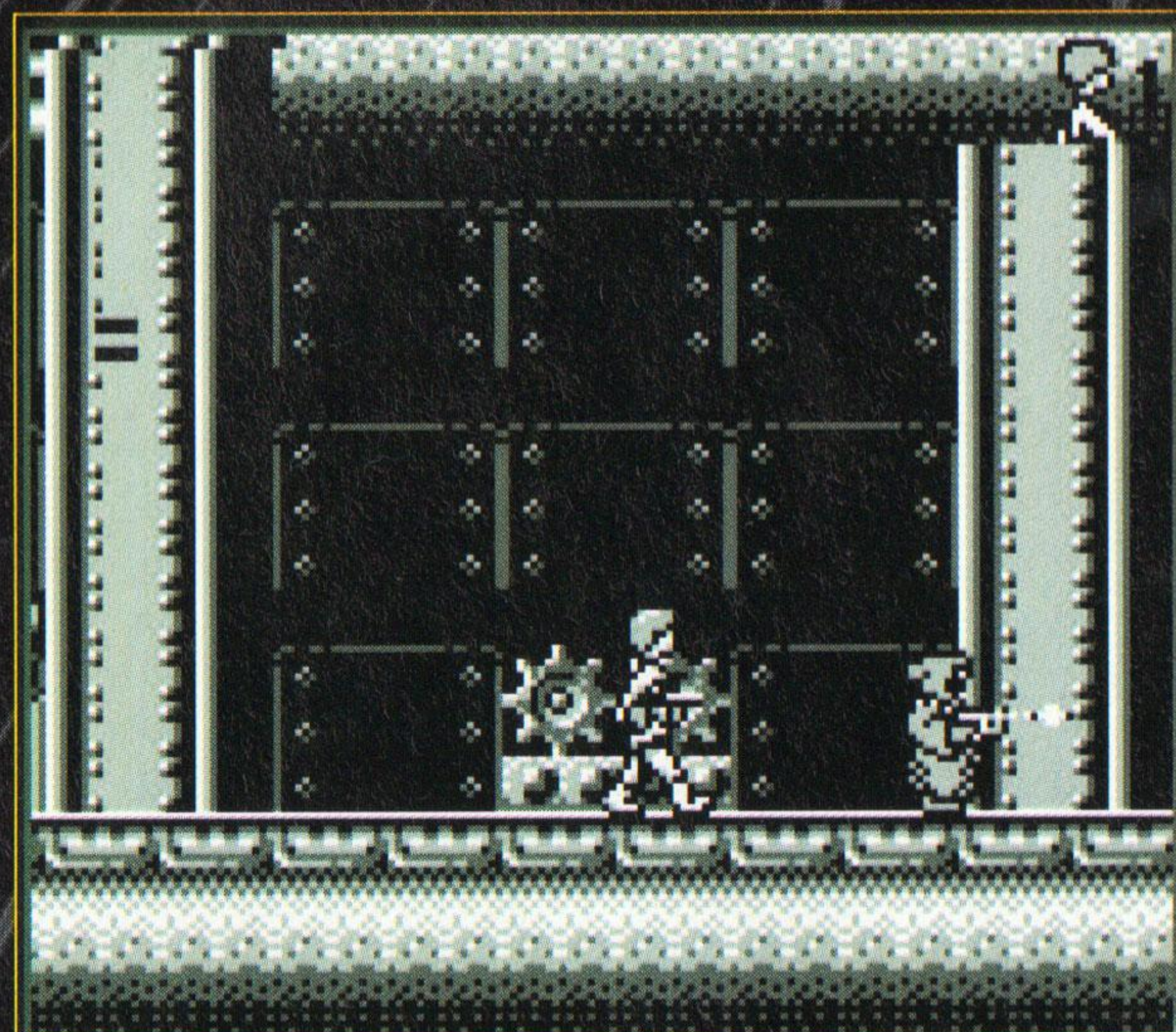
The Empire Strikes Back (Ubisoft) - Gameboy, 1992

More of the same really, but with slightly improved graphics, and more challenge. The most memorable scene has to be when you die; a little picture of Darth Vader appears with the phrase "All too easy" embossed underneath. You have to laugh. **Overall: 7/10**



Star Wars (Ubisoft) - Gameboy, 1992

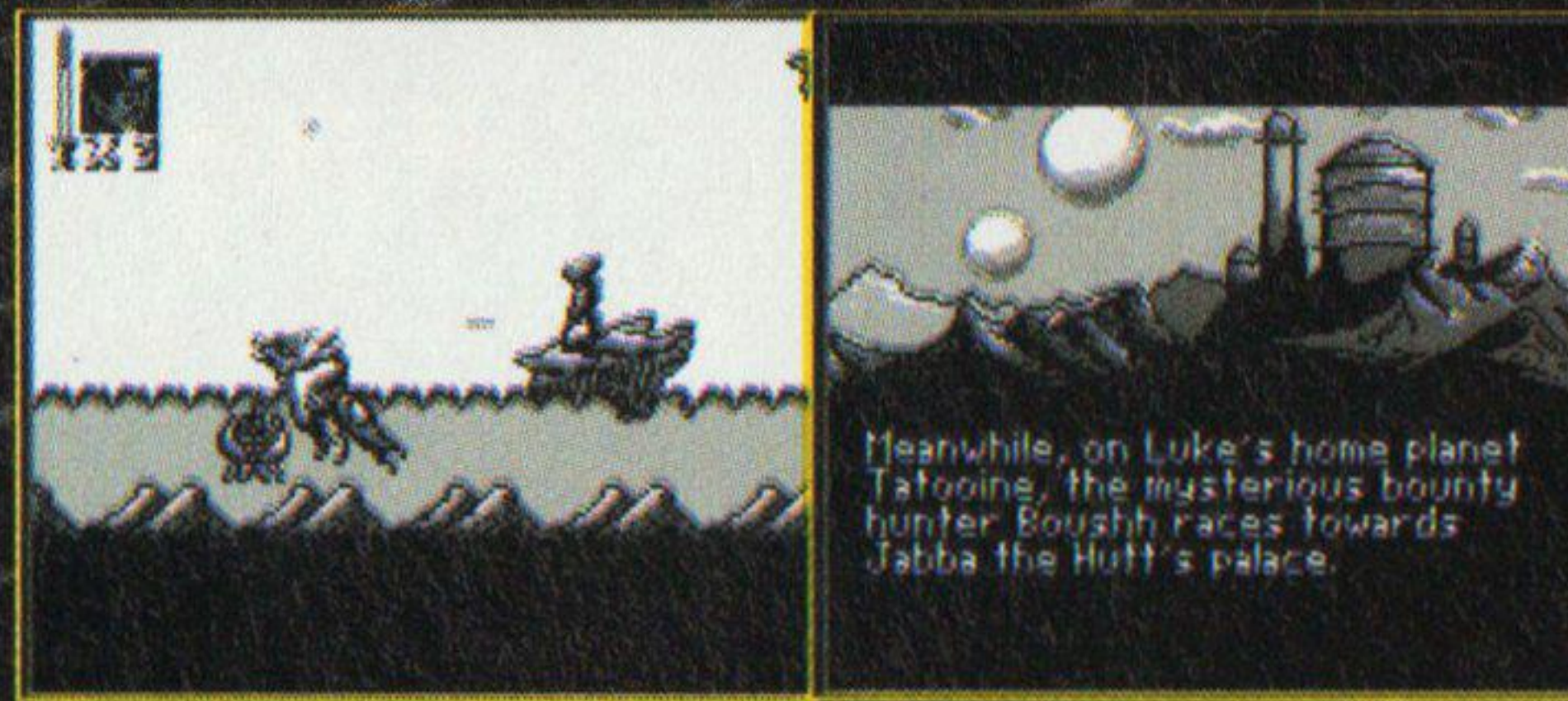
Even with its minuscule monochrome screen, this version somehow managed to retain all the features of the NES game, including speedbikes, huge levels and plenty of end of level 'bosses'. Train commuters everywhere had a platform they were happy to stick around on. **Overall: 7/10**



Super Return of the Jedi (THQ) - Gameboy, 1993

New programmers were employed for the final part of the trilogy, and they rose to the task admirably. This time we could choose to play with either, Luke Chewie or Leia. Cute. But by then our patience for Game Boy platform games was wearing thin.

Overall: 6/10



Super Star Wars (JVC) - Super NES, 1993

Super Star Wars was a blend of two gaming genres; space shoot-'em-up and 2D platformer. Rich with characters, gameplay and dodgy movie sequences, Super Star Wars proved to be great fun, but suffered appallingly from slow down when too many sprites were on screen. Apart from that it was hard to fault. **Overall: 8/10**



Super Empire Strikes Back (JVC) - Super NES, 1993

Spot the difference. Again, with both platform and arcade sections, it was hard to see how this differed from Super Star Wars. In reality it didn't (bar a few costume changes), but if something isn't broken, why fix it?

Overall: 7/10



Super Return of the Jedi (JVC) - Super NES, 1994

Deja'vu? Yes, the platform/arcade mix extended to the final game of the trilogy, and subsequently Super Return of the Jedi held few surprises. However, by now the slow down problem had been more or less solved, so gameplay had actually improved. Of the three, this was the best. **Overall: 9/10**



Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire (LucasArts) - N64, 1998

Nintendo games are full of contradictions: On one hand they often contain gameplay of exceptional quality (Legend of Zelda, Super Mario World), and yet on the other they get so bogged down by graphical possibilities, the entertainment value is completely lost. Sadly, this limp cinematic shoot-'em-up is one such case. **Overall: 5/10**



Star Wars: Rogue Squadron (THE) - N64, 1999

Nintendo's latest foray into the Star Wars universe is an arcade flight simulation based on the comics, and takes place in-between Star Wars and The Empire Strikes Back, with many of the film characters making an appearance. Featuring a 4MB expansion Pak, there are plenty of explosive effects and a barrage of FMV cut-scenes. Due in March, it should prove to be the perfect remedy for N64 owners who are pining for the new film. **Overall: 8/10**



LucasArts

X-Wing Imperial Pursuit
(PC)

LucasArts

X-Wing Tour of Duty
(PC)

LucasArts

Rebel Assault
(PC/3DO/Sega 32X/CD)

LucasArts

**Star Wars:
The Arcade Game**
(Sega 32X)

LucasArts

Star Wars: Chess
(Sega 32X)

LucasArts

1994

Super Return of the Jedi
(Super NES, Game Boy)

JVC/Nintendo

TIE Fighter
(PC/Macintosh)

LucasArts

1995

Dark Forces
(PC)

LucasArts

Rebel Assault II
(PC)

LucasArts

1997

Masters of Teras Kasi
(PlayStation)

LucasArts

Rebel Assault II
(PlayStation/Macintosh)

LucasArts

Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight
(PC)

LucasArts

Shadows of the Empire
(PC)

LucasArts

X-Wing versus TIE Fighter
(PC)

LucasArts

Balance of Power
(PC)

LucasArts

Yoda Stories
(PC)

LucasArts

Dark Forces
(PlayStation/Macintosh)

LucasArts

USING THE FORCE

Under LucasArts' guidance, PCs have taken Star Wars games to a new level. Here are the games that made it possible...

X-Wing, 1993

This ever popular space shoot-'em-up is so good it spawned three campaign disks: *B-Wing*, *X-Wing: Imperial Pursuit*, and *X-Wing Tour of Duty*. You can still find it on compilation disks today.

TIE Fighter, 1994

The sequel to *X-Wing* is an absolute gem. Better graphics, better gameplay... and this time you're the bad guy! What more could you possibly want (save your own TIE Fighter to fly down to Tesco's).



Dark Forces, 1995

LucasArts first attempt at the first-person shooter featured the notorious 'Stormtroopers taking a piss' scene. But what was the game like? Bloody marvellous!



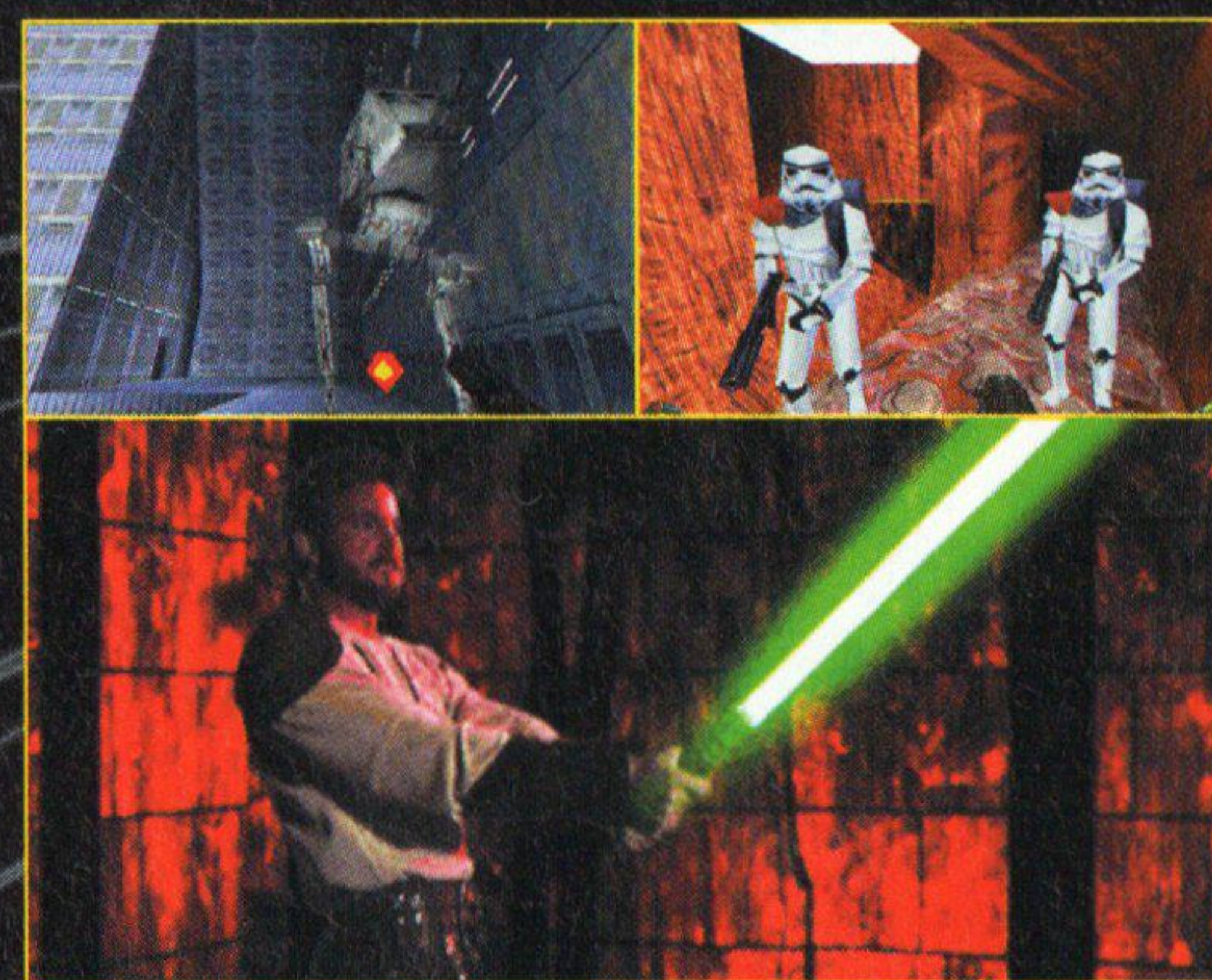
Rebel Assault, 1993

Aaaaaah! Take it away.

When it comes to compelling arcade games, this is at the bottom of the list. Sit through utterly linear gameplay, and then wonder why Star Wars ever got so popular. Can't be right.

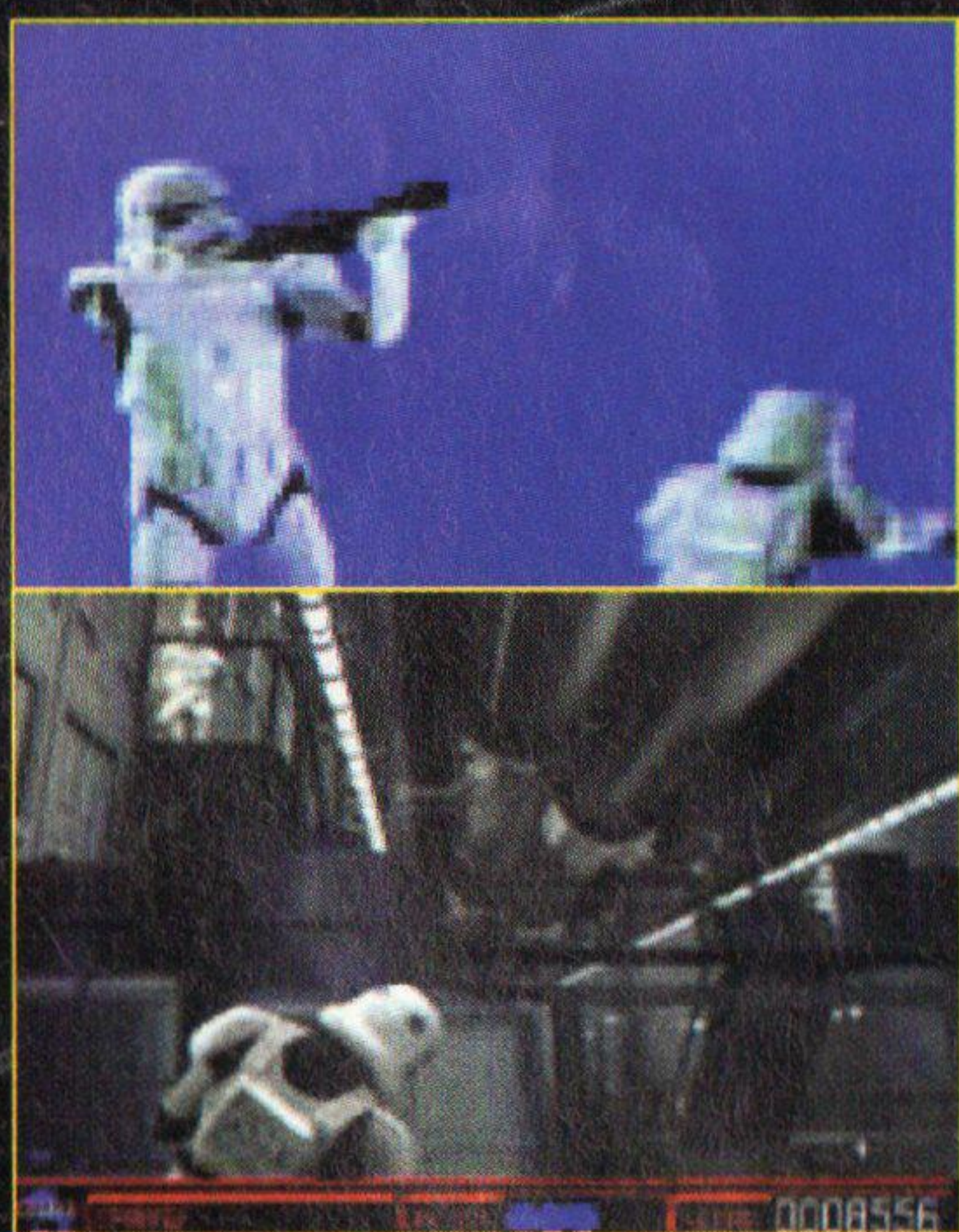
Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight, 1997

Jackpot! According to popular consensus, this is one of the best games of all-time. Massive levels, wonderful graphics and sheer quality from start to finish. Mark it!



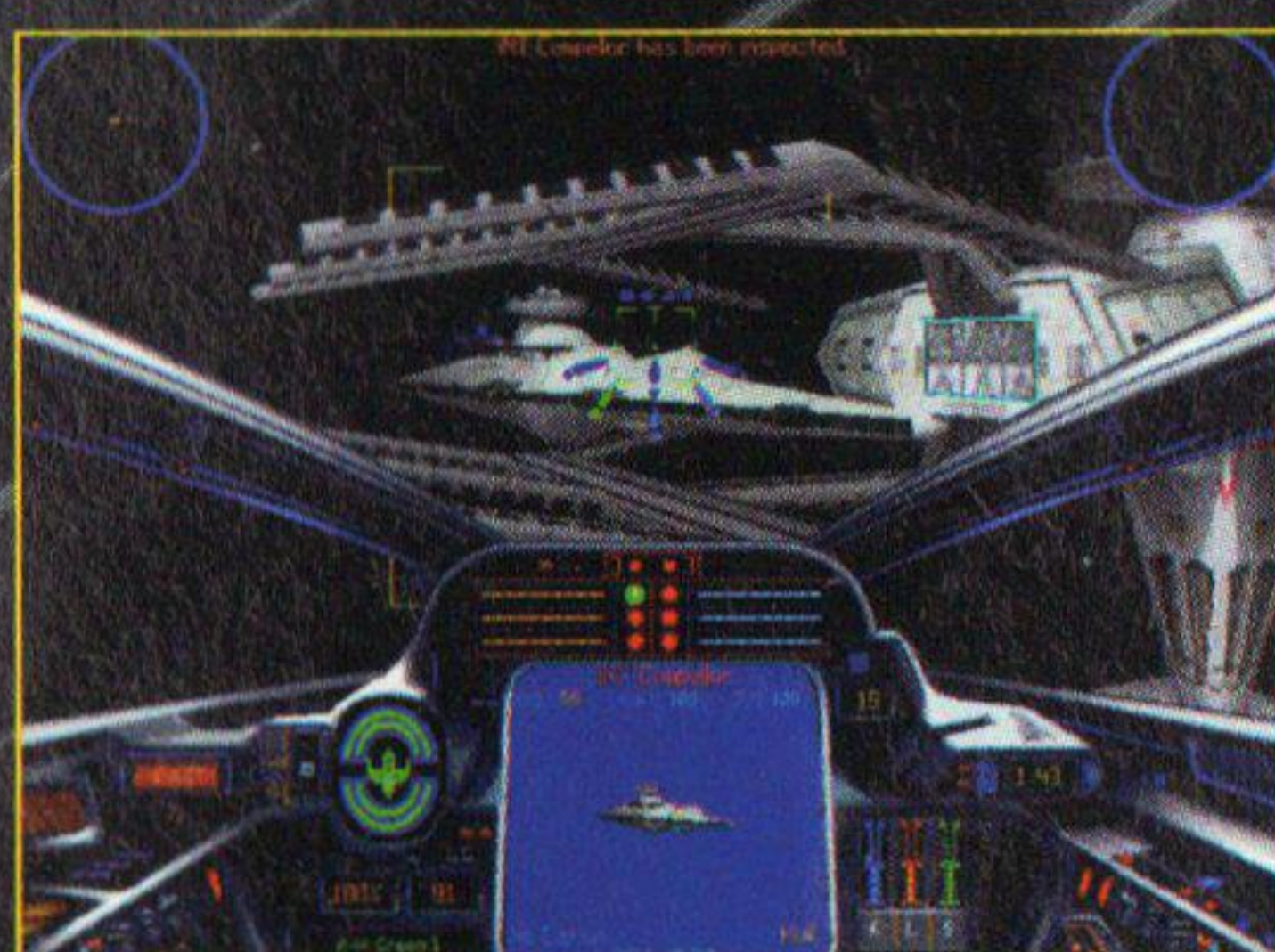
Rebel Assault II, 1995

Sequel to the 1993 non-event. The graphics are slightly better, but the play was still restricted. Apparently it's a love/hate kind of thang.



X-Wing Collector Series, 1998

Containing enhanced versions of *X-Wing: Collector's CD-ROM*, *TIE Fighter: Collector's CD-ROM*, as well as *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter: Flight School*, this is an essential purchase for all Star Wars space combat fans.



Yoda Stories, 1997

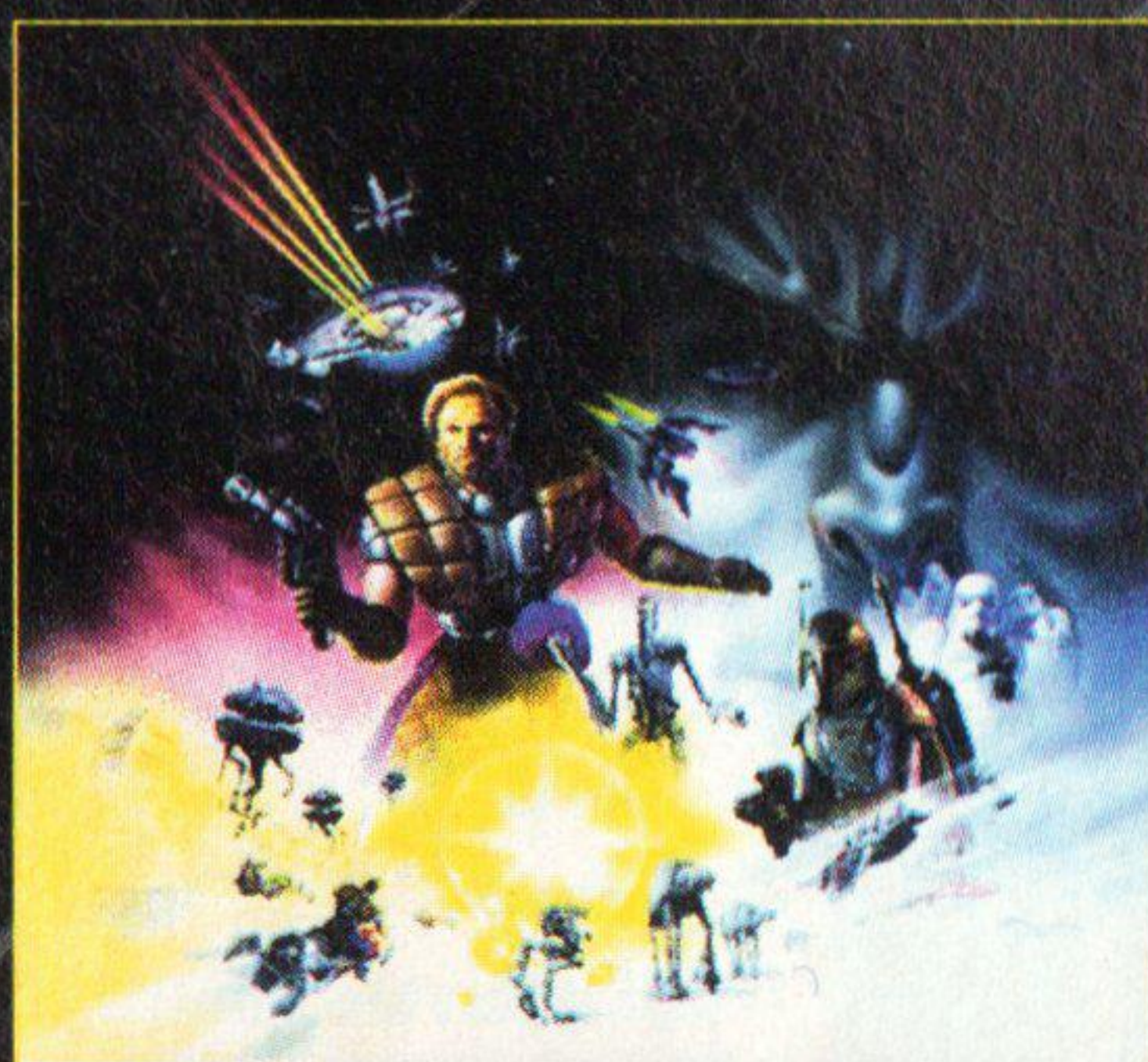
Join Luke Skywalker as he trains to become a Jedi and save the galaxy. Err, not really too sure what to make of this 'Desktop Adventure'. Still, worth a shot if you have the mental age of a five-year-old (or actually are five-years-old).

X-Wing versus TIE Fighter, 1997

A return to deep space for the third in the *X-Wing* series meant temporary stagnation as far as Star Wars 3D shoot-'em-ups were concerned. It's by no means bad, but definitely not up to previous standards. The campaign disk, *Balance of Power*, is now also available.

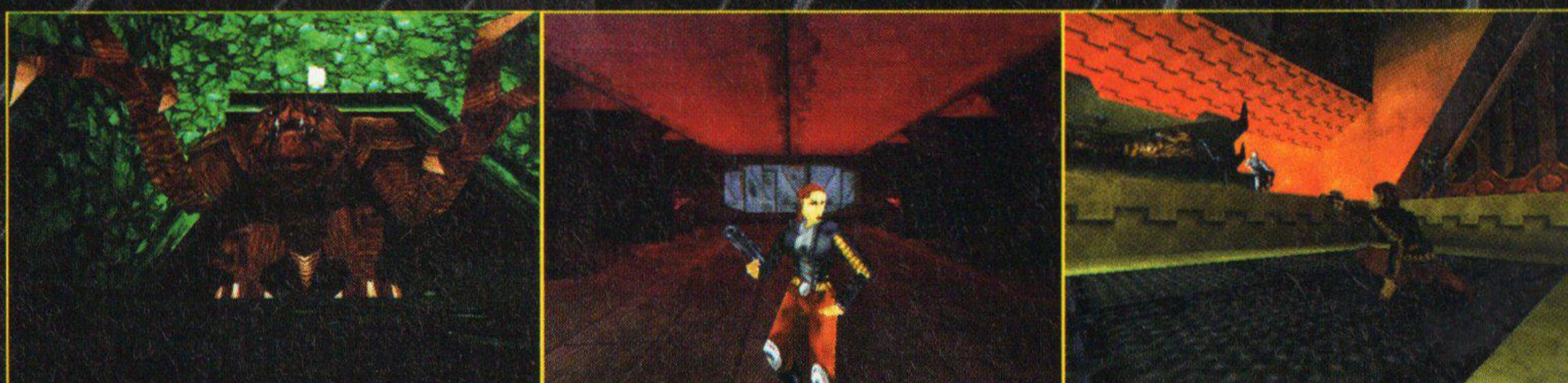
Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire, 1997

Owning this is a sin.



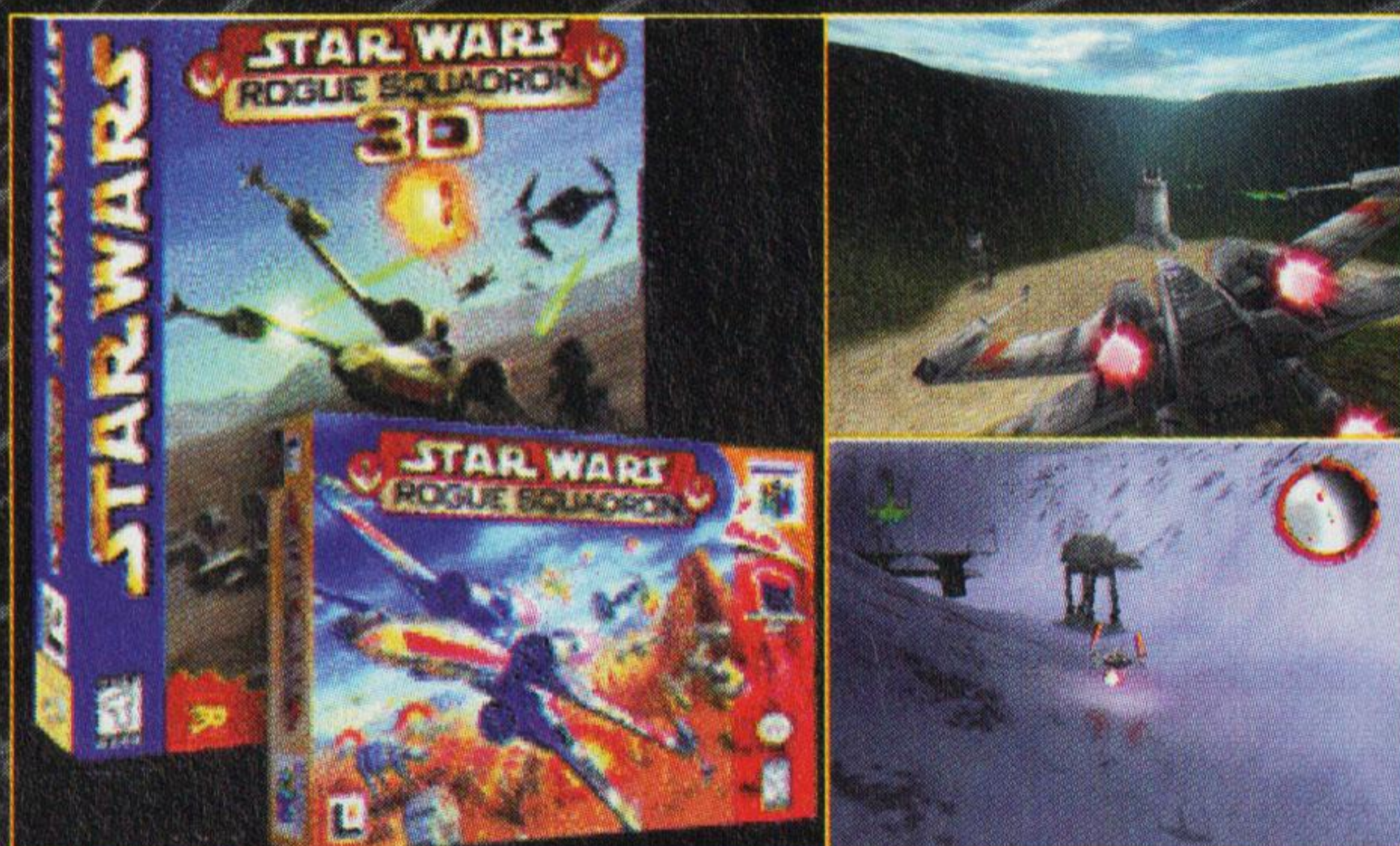
Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith, 1998

An absolutely stunning game. The depth and scale felt whilst playing this sends shivers down your spine. An all-time classic – and sexual equality to boot; the star of this game is female Jedi master, Mara Jade.



Rogue Squadron, 1998

Our reviewers weren't overly impressed with this, and to be fair, your average PC user expects a little bit more nowadays. Not a bad shoot-'em-up though – better than *Shadows of the Empire* at least.



Star Wars: Rebellion, 1998

Not one of the best Star Wars offerings we've ever seen, but if you want a real-time strategy game based in the Star Wars universe, this is your only hope...



SONY SUB-SPACE STATION

SONY SUB-SPACE STATION

Nintendo have recently signed an exclusivity deal with LucasArts meaning PlayStation Star Wars games are about to become surplus to requirements. Don't fret, though, there are some out there, it's just that they're, well, err, not brilliant, shall we say. The poor PlayStation has had a rough deal really.

Will Sega's Dreamcast fare any better? Judging from Sega's past experiences, the prospects are not too good. But rest assured we'll let you know when we know ourselves. Back to the PlayStation...

Dark Forces, 1997

This conversion of the PC classic is by far the best of the PlayStation bunch.

Masters of Teräs Kasi, 1998

Alongside *Star Wars: Chess* on the Sega 32X, this awful beat-'em-up rates as one of the poorest Star Wars games to date.

Rebel Assault II, 1997

Okay if you like mindless shooting, but Star Wars fans are more discerning, aren't they?

STARS FOR THE FUTURE

At the moment there are two Star Wars titles guaranteed for release on the PC this year, but rumour has it there's at least two more based on George Lucas' Episode One film. Apparently one of them is even going to make it onto the shelves in time for the film's May 1999 release. We'll see...

Star Wars: Force Commander, LucasArts

Delayed now until next winter, *Force Commander* is based on the new films and allows the player to control hundreds of different units across many different planets. Looking similar to *Total Annihilation*, *FC* looks set to be the first real-time simulation Star Wars fans have experienced. Look forward to it..



Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance, LucasArts

Expected in the first quarter of 1999, *X-Wing Alliance* is being developed by Totally Games – the team responsible for the previous X-Wing and TIE Fighter sims. So what's new? Well, the main difference is the inclusion of Han Solo's Millennium Falcon. Larry Holland, lead designer for Totally Games, had these words to say: "The highly anticipated addition of the Millennium Falcon in *X-Wing Alliance* finally gives Star Wars game fans what they've long hoped for: the chance to emulate Han Solo by flying the legendary Corellian transport into the heat of battle." Thanks for those words of wisdom Larry, but for now we'll all have to make do with these screenshots.



1998

Jedi Knight:

Mysteries of the Sith
(PC)

LucasArts

Rebellion

(PC)

LucasArts

Rogue Squadron

(PC)

LucasArts

Shadows of the Empire

(N64)

THE/LucasArts

X-Wing Collector Series

(PC)

LucasArts

1999

Force Commander

(PC)

LucasArts

X-Wing Alliance

(PC) LucasArts

Rogue Squadron

(N64)

THE/LucasArts

Star Wars: Episode 1:

A Phantom Menace

(Film)

And much, much more...

Having words with...

This month we are **fortunate to have landed** our first encounter with **David Braben**, one of those few **elite programmers** who have pushed back the frontiers of **computer gaming**.



David Braben is the man responsible for some of the best-loved computer games of all time. He started out writing software for the BBC Micro and the C64, and his classic space trading and combat game *Elite* became a legend on those early systems.

His latest game, *V2000*, is a sequel to another early classic, and was released late last year to critical acclaim. He has kindly agreed to talk to Total CONTROL about his past, present and future.

Q: How old were you when you wrote your first computer game, and what was it about?

A: 17. It was a game called 'Nuclear War' on the Acorn Atom. It showed a view of the Northern Hemisphere of the world, centred on the Atlantic. It was a two player game, and both sides sent ICBMs at each other. They also had anti-missile missiles and cruise missiles, and eight cities each. The game played a little like two instances of *Missile Command*, where each player spent some time shooting at the other side, and some time defending their own side. The scores were based on millions of "deaths" – a bit sick, eh? (But great fun).

I never attempted selling this game, or the others I wrote for the Atom. My first commercial game was *Elite* with Ian Bell, who I met at university. This was based on ideas from a 3D space game I had half-written called *Fighter*.

Q: Of all the games you have written, which is your personal favourite, and are there any computer games by other people that you wish you had written?

A: I suppose it has to be *Elite* as my personal favourite, of those that I have written. I really enjoyed Eugene Jarvis's *Defender*, so I suppose I would like to have written that. Similarly, Peter Molyneux's *Populous*, mainly because it was so different to what was around at the time, when certain publishers were claiming that there were only five basic kinds of game. More recently, I think Shigeru Miyamoto's *Mario 64* was very impressive and woke Japan up to 3D games. Since then, though, nothing really springs to mind, sadly. I don't think the *Tomb Raider* series is particularly innovative, and the numerous first-person shooters (though great fun in multiplayer) all feel a bit similar to each other. Even *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* did not live up to my expectations.

Q: Now that you have got *V2000* finished and out the door, what will you be working on next?

A: Too early to go into details, but we have been very happy with the way things have gone with *Grolier*, so we will be doing our next game with them.



Q: *Elite* is still the game which most people think of when your name is mentioned. How much persuading would you need to write a new version?

A: Everyone's hopes for a new *Elite* sequel are very high indeed, as *Elite* has a special place in many people's hearts. For this reason the quality has to be very high indeed so as not to disappoint – it has to be way better than the competition. I think we can do this, but I want to be able to spend the time on it that such a game deserves.

Q: Have you had a chance to try out a Dreamcast? What do you think of it?

A: Yes. I think it is a very good machine and will be supporting it in the future. I particularly think the on-line side of it is very exciting.

Q: If you could look ten years into the future, what do you think computer games would look like?

A: Already games are diverging into several 'camps'. Games like *Tetris*, *Chess*, *Bust-a-Move* are not trying to look real, and so will remain looking esoteric in the future. Other games that are trying to be realistic (*Half-Life* etc.) will be about as realistic as the graphics that currently appear in the cinema, but in real-time. But looks are not the only point, are they?

Q: Do you think the era of the bedroom programmer has gone for good and that the big corporations have totally taken over computer gaming?

A: No. It's just a lot harder to get 'in'. *Tetris* proved this, and so could another game. I think the era when a bedroom programmer can compete in all respects has gone, just because of the sheer weight of content in most current commercial games. But this shouldn't put people off trying!

DAVID BRABEN

Q: If you hadn't become a game programmer, what do you think you would be doing for a living now?

A: Difficult to say. Possibly a research scientist or astronomer.

Q: If you could meet any historical person, who would it be and why?

A: Sounds like those tacky One-2-One ads!

John F Kennedy might be an interesting person to meet, particularly as he could then be warned about not going to Dallas on the day he was shot. I think history would have been quite different if he had survived – perhaps the space programme would have had additional goals other than just beating the Russians to the Moon. One thing I remember from being a kid was how rapid progress was with the space programme, and it felt like it stopped (or tailed off hugely, at least) as soon as the first lunar landing. If you were to go back and tell people in 1969 that no-one had been back to the moon since 1970 they would have been very disappointed. Expectations then were that there would at least be scheduled flights to Mars by the end of the millennium. Perhaps we have progressed in other directions (like famine relief – yes, right!), but I don't think so.

Q: If you won the lottery jackpot this weekend, would you still turn up for work on Monday morning?

A: Yes. In some ways writing *Elite* was not unlike winning the jackpot, as I went from having almost no money (couldn't afford a BBC Micro) to being very wealthy in a short time. Would you? **TC**

David Braben gameography

1983 – *Elite* (BBC B version), with Ian Bell.

1985 – *Elite* (C64 version)

1987 – *Lander*, an early demo of *Zarch* bundled with Acorn machines.

1988 – *Conqueror*, with Jonathon Griffiths

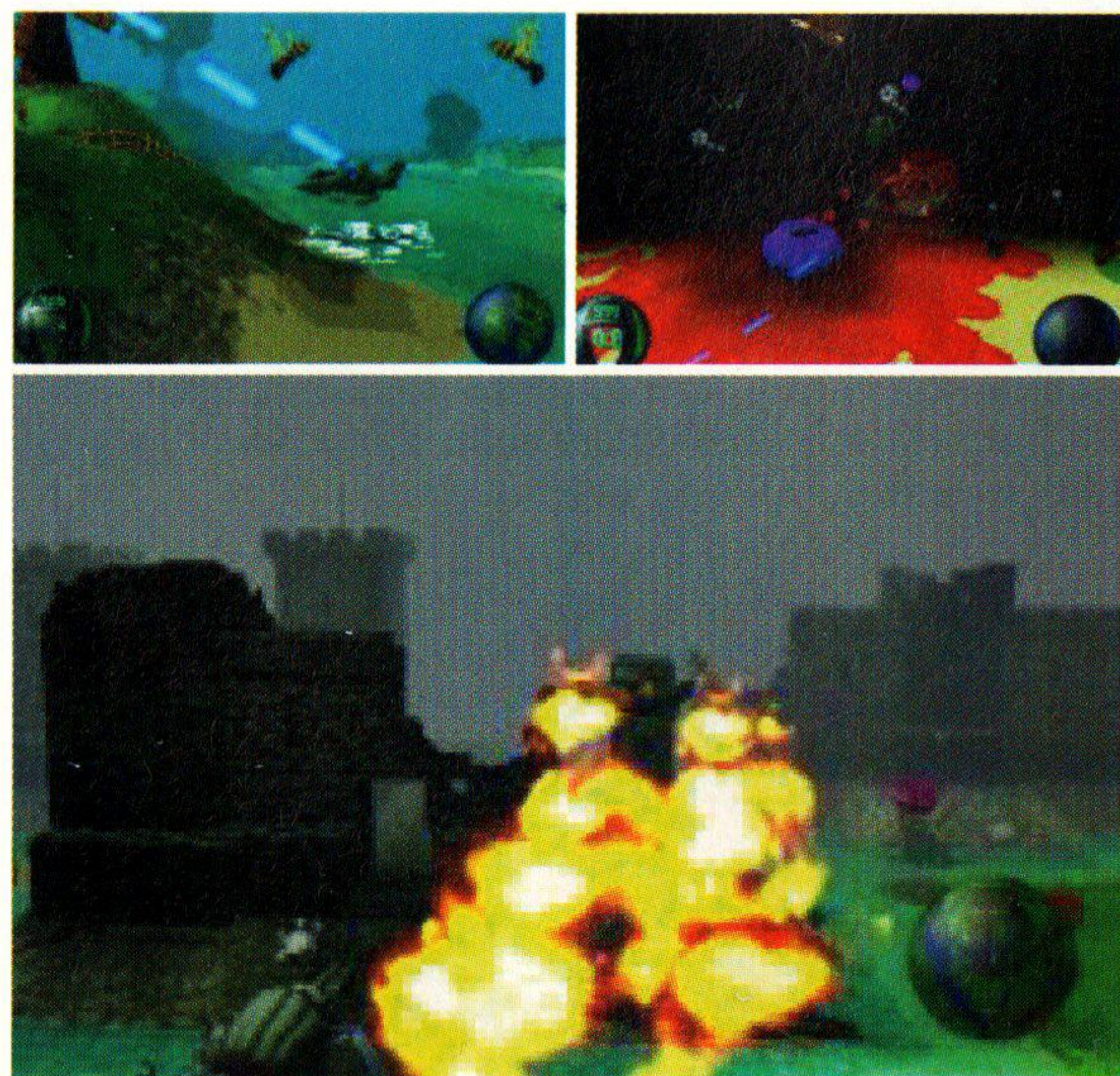
1989 – *Zarch* (later released as *Virus*)

1993 – *Frontier: Elite II*

1995 – *Frontier: First Encounters*

1995 – *Darxside*

1998 – *Virus 2000*



STATION

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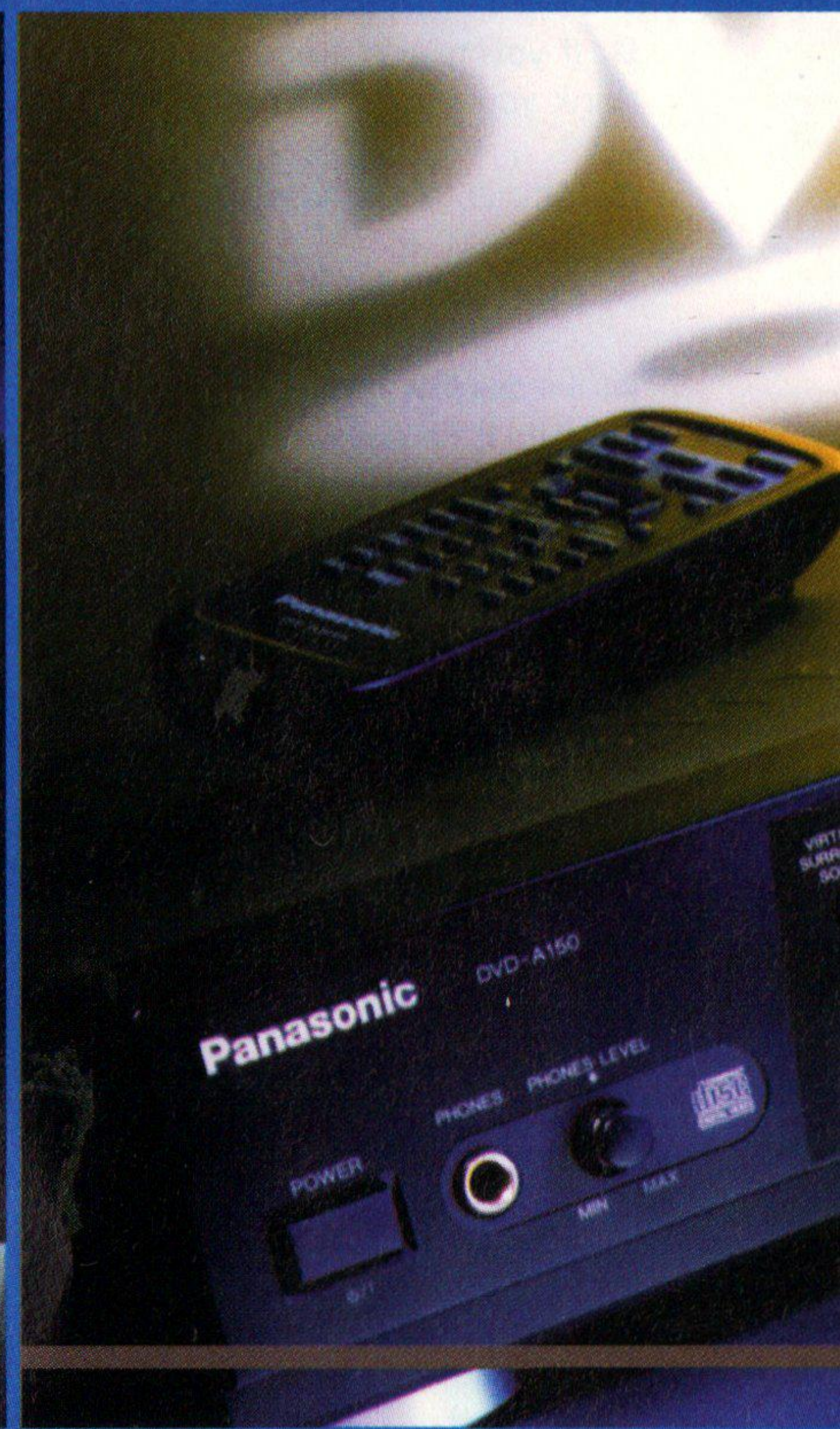
METAL GEAR SOLID

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What's this DV

You probably don't **own a DVD player**. You probably don't **even know what it stands for**. But DVD is here to stay, so read on to learn what **the future holds...**



DOLBY 5.1

Cinagoers will already be familiar with the amazing effects of a full Dolby Digital sound system, but up until now, such quality has been beyond the scope of most home users. However, the advent of DVD has brought with it the Dolby 5.1 system. This is a hardware configuration using the Dolby AC3 digital data format to provide true multi-channel sound.

Dolby 5.1 uses five full-frequency channels to drive speakers positioned front centre, front right and left, and rear right and left, plus a separate sixth channel for a subwoofer. Normal surround-sound systems simply process a stereo audio signal to simulate three-dimensional sound. Dolby 5.1, however, is true surround sound, giving cinema-perfect audio for movies and awesome atmosphere for games.

Everyone says that DVD is the coming thing, so I guess it must be true. You can usually tell with things like this. Betamax got whipped by VHS, but you could see that coming a mile off. CDi was a flop, but everyone knew it from the start. Laser disc was way too expensive and never really took off, but DVD has that polystyrene and solder smell of a whole new industry standard, right up there with audio cassettes, 35mm film and floppy disks. And the compact disk, of course, which is the format that it will, over the next couple of years, steadily replace.

The DVD format has the support of computer manufacturers, record companies, electronics companies, moviemakers, and even a few software developers and publishers, which is unprecedented for a new recording format. In theory, this virtually guarantees its success.

Bigger, better, faster, more

DVD stands for Digital Versatile Disk – or possibly Digital Video Disk, depending on whom you ask. Physically, once you peel the labels off, a standard DVD is indistinguishable from a CD. It retains the familiar five-inch disk format, vital if DVD players are to be backward compatible with existing audio CD recordings.

Essentially, DVD is just a bigger and better version of the CDs we have all been getting used to for the past ten years. Advances in technology from a number of major electronics companies – notably Toshiba, Panasonic and Compaq – have allowed more data to be stored in a smaller space and to be

read faster, and new data compression techniques mean that more efficient use can be made of the available space.

On the fast track

The differences between a DVD disk and a CD disk are too small to be seen with the naked eye but make a huge difference to the performance of the medium. Like the CD, a DVD consists of a metallic recording surface encased in a plastic shell. Both formats operate on the same principle, using a laser to read minute pits in the metal surface. These pits form the tracks of the disk and contain the recorded information in digital code. The difference is that the pits on a DVD are slightly less than half the size of those on a CD (0.4 microns for the DVD, as against 0.83 microns for the CD – a micron is one thousandth of a millimetre), allowing the tracks to be much more densely packed. Track spacing on a CD is 1.6 microns, whereas the DVD manages 0.74 microns. The data density of a DVD is roughly four times that of a CD.

This is possible because the solid-state laser in a CD player uses infra-red light to read the disk, whereas the newly developed DVD laser uses visible red light. The shorter wavelength allows for greater definition, hence the smaller pits and narrower tracks.

Side by side

The other major difference is that DVDs can have more than one layer. The recording surface, or 'substrate', in a CD is 1.2mm thick. The DVD can have two 0.6mm substrates sandwiched together by another new development, a bonding

D thing then?

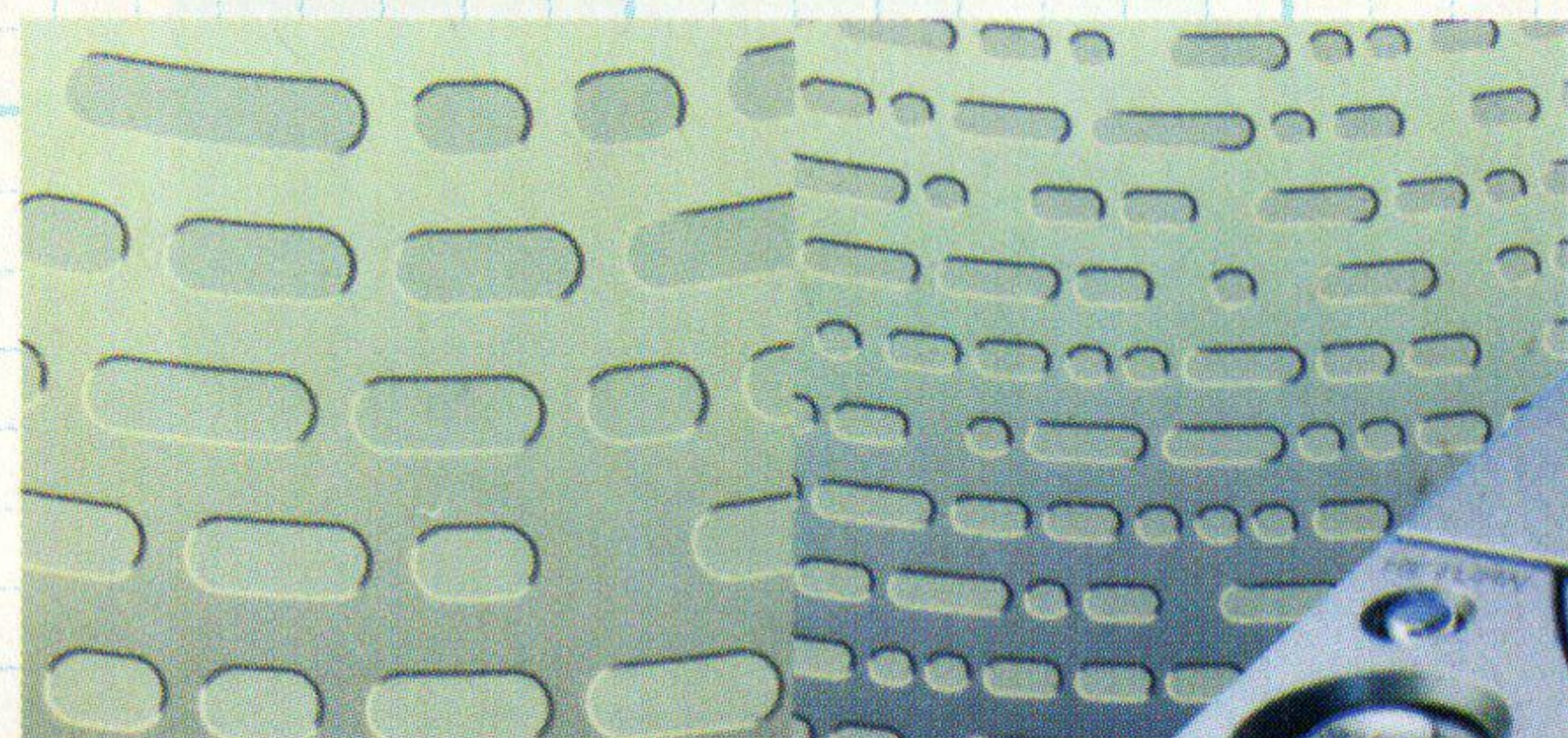


All pictures courtesy of Panasonic Ltd.

method utilising a special transparent photo-polymer. The top layer is gold in colour and is a partial reflector. The laser, which is more powerful than that in a standard CD player, can also be focused, which means it can read the top layer then move on to read through it to the silver layer beneath.

The multi-layered structure of the disk not only increases the data storage capacity, but also makes it physically stronger, allowing the disk to spin faster. This means that data can be read from the disk at a much higher rate, which improves playback quality. The first generation DVD drives can read data at a rate of 11MB per second, equivalent to an eight-speed CD-ROM.

The DVD can also be double-sided, which means even more storage. In all there are four different types of DVD. The largest is designated DVD-18, a double-sided double-layered disk with a capacity of just over seventeen gigabytes. Double-sided single layer disks are designated DVD-10 and hold 9.4 GB. DVD-9,



The difference between CD and DVD

MPEG-2

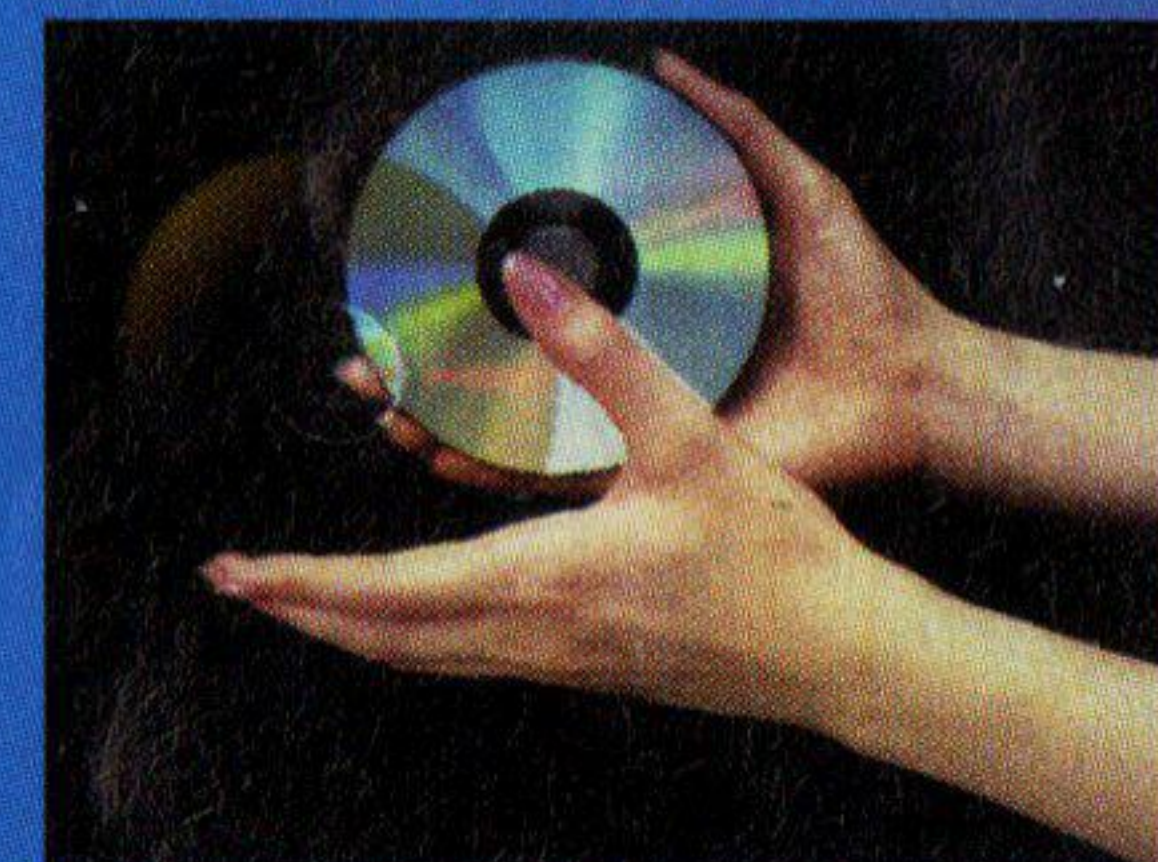
DVD is being touted as the video format of the future, because even the smallest disk can hold over two hours of high quality moving pictures, complete with multi-track, multi-channel Dolby Digital sound. The way that this is achieved is by the use of the powerful MPEG-2 data compression system. MPEG stands for the Motion Picture Expert Group, an international body set up to standardise compression formats for more efficient

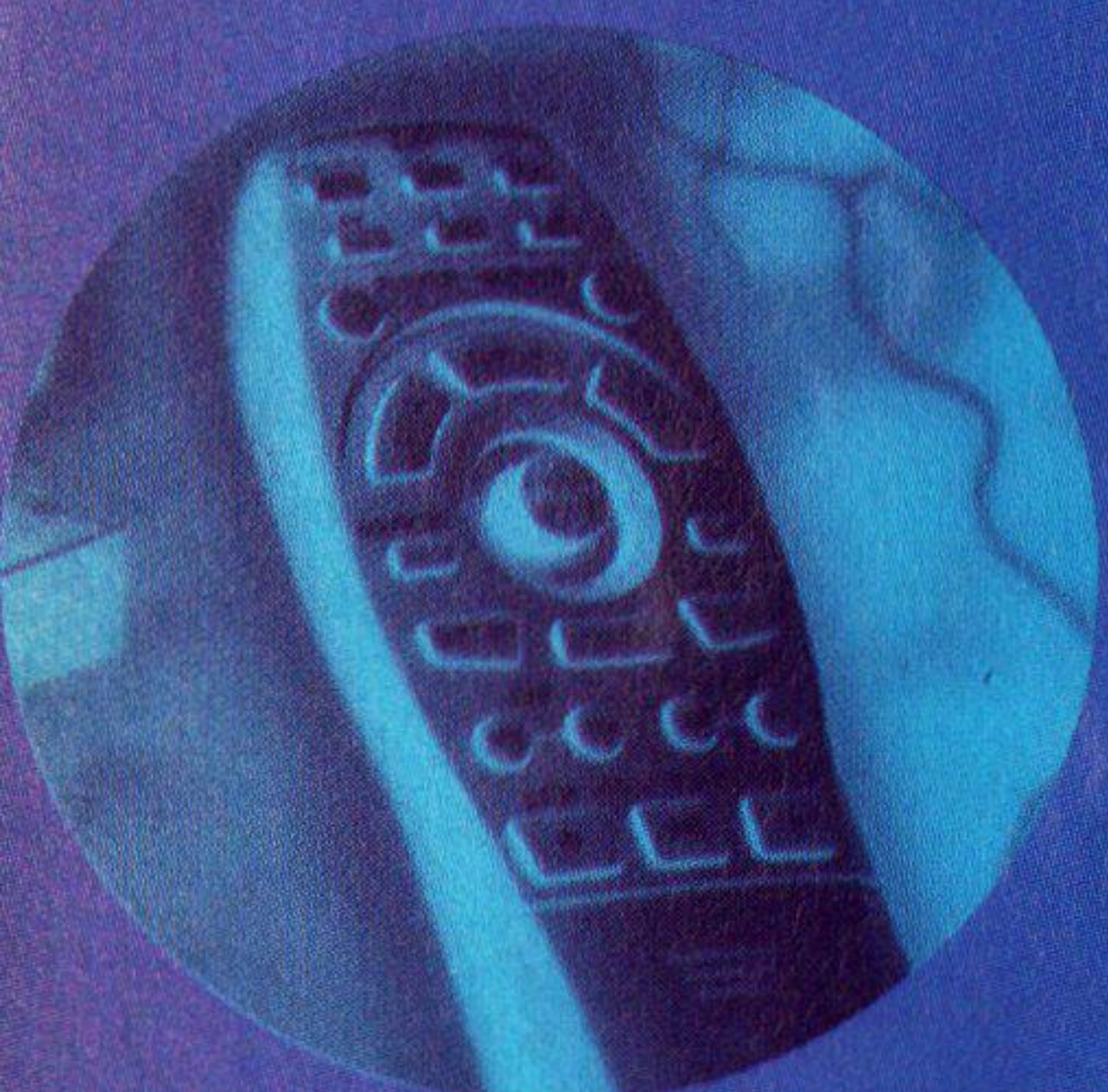
transmission and storage of digital audio and video.

If you have ever looked at a length of movie film, you will have noticed that from frame to frame, the image changes only a little. MPEG-2 works by digitally removing the parts of each frame that haven't changed from the previous one and only transmitting the moving parts of the image. If this is done correctly, there is no loss of quality, and video information can be compressed by as much as thirty-six to one.

Problems with this format will only arise when films are

badly encoded, in which case blocky artefacts being superimposed on the image can cause distortion. There are a couple of DVD demo disks doing the rounds which exhibit this problem. As time goes by and encoding routines improve, this issue should disappear.





the single-sided double-layered disk, holds 8.5 GB, while the smallest single-layered, single-sided disk can store 4.7 GB. This compares with 660 MB for a standard CD-ROM.

Moving pictures

At this point, it is important to emphasise the distinction between DVD-Video and DVD-ROM. Even the smallest DVD can hold over two hours of high-quality video footage, with eight tracks of eight-channel sound, but does this by use of MPEG-2 compression. DVD-ROM is the format that will be used for PC-based games, and also allows data storage equivalent to over seven standard CD-ROMs. The next generation of graphics cards, such as the recently announced Voodoo 3 from 3Dfx, will have full support for the MPEG-2 system, which means that animated cut scenes in games can be higher quality, with superior Dolby Digital sound, multiple camera angles and multilingual subtitles. However, MPEG-2 will not work with the actual game code, so DVD games will be similar to CD games, only bigger. Any increases in game quality will come from advances in programming and graphics hardware and from faster PCs, rather from the data storage format.

Are you sitting comfortably?

DVD-ROM and DVD-Video will run on completely different machines. DVD-Video players are similar to your domestic VCR. They can be used for playing movies and audio disks, but will not recognise DVD-ROM disks. Depending on your graphics and sound cards, your PC may be able to read DVD-Video, allowing you to watch movies on your monitor. But why sit at a desk to watch a film on a fifteen inch screen when you can sit in comfort and watch it on a decent-sized TV?

Despite the superior playback quality of DVD over other formats, it is not without its disadvantages. Because of the MPEG-2 compression format, DVD-Video cannot be played

backwards, and freeze-frame quality may be disappointing. Also, recordable DVD is not yet available. When it is, earlier machines may have difficulty reading the new disks. Also, first generation players may have problems with the double-layered DVD-9 and 18 disks.

Around the world

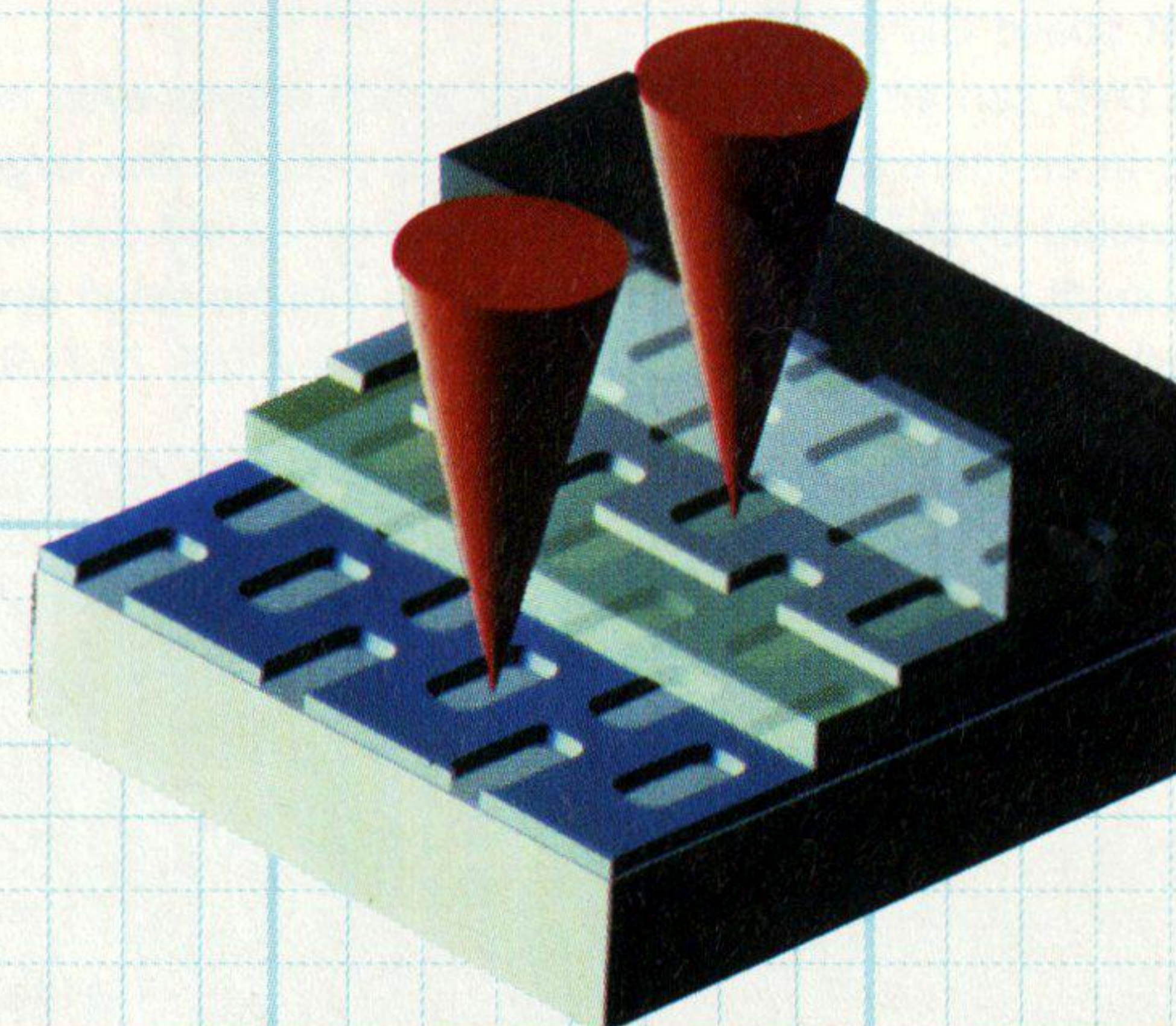
DVD has received widespread support from the movie industry, mostly because it gives them the opportunity to sell large chunks of their back catalogues on a new format. Since DVD is not yet recordable, there is no problem with piracy, but there is a hidden safeguard built into the format. Domestic DVD players and the movies to play on them will be regionally coded. If you buy a DVD in one region, it will only play movies bearing a special code for that region. There will be six separate regional codes for different areas of the world. As you might expect, North America is region one. Region two covers Greenland, Europe, the Middle East, Japan and South Africa. Region three includes South East Asia and the Philippines, region four is South America and Australia, region five is the rest of Africa and Asia, including India and Pakistan, and region six is China. The worry is that movie companies will only release their products in the profitable regions one and two and ignore the rest of the world. For those keen to watch badly dubbed rubbish, there are several methods for converting players to play all regional codes, and instructions on how to do this can be found at several locations on the Internet.

Where are the games?

Despite the potential of the DVD format, games developers have been slow to commit themselves to it. Several games which were supposed to be appearing on the new format have been withheld for commercial reasons. *Black Dahlia*, the superb multi-CD mystery-thriller from Take 2 Interactive, was supposed to have been the first game to use the new format. The game was released in April '98 on eight CD-ROMs, but plans to release it on DVD have now been dropped. Similarly, Fox Interactive's *X-Files* game will now not be appearing on DVD, and neither will Westwood Studios' excellent *Blade Runner*.

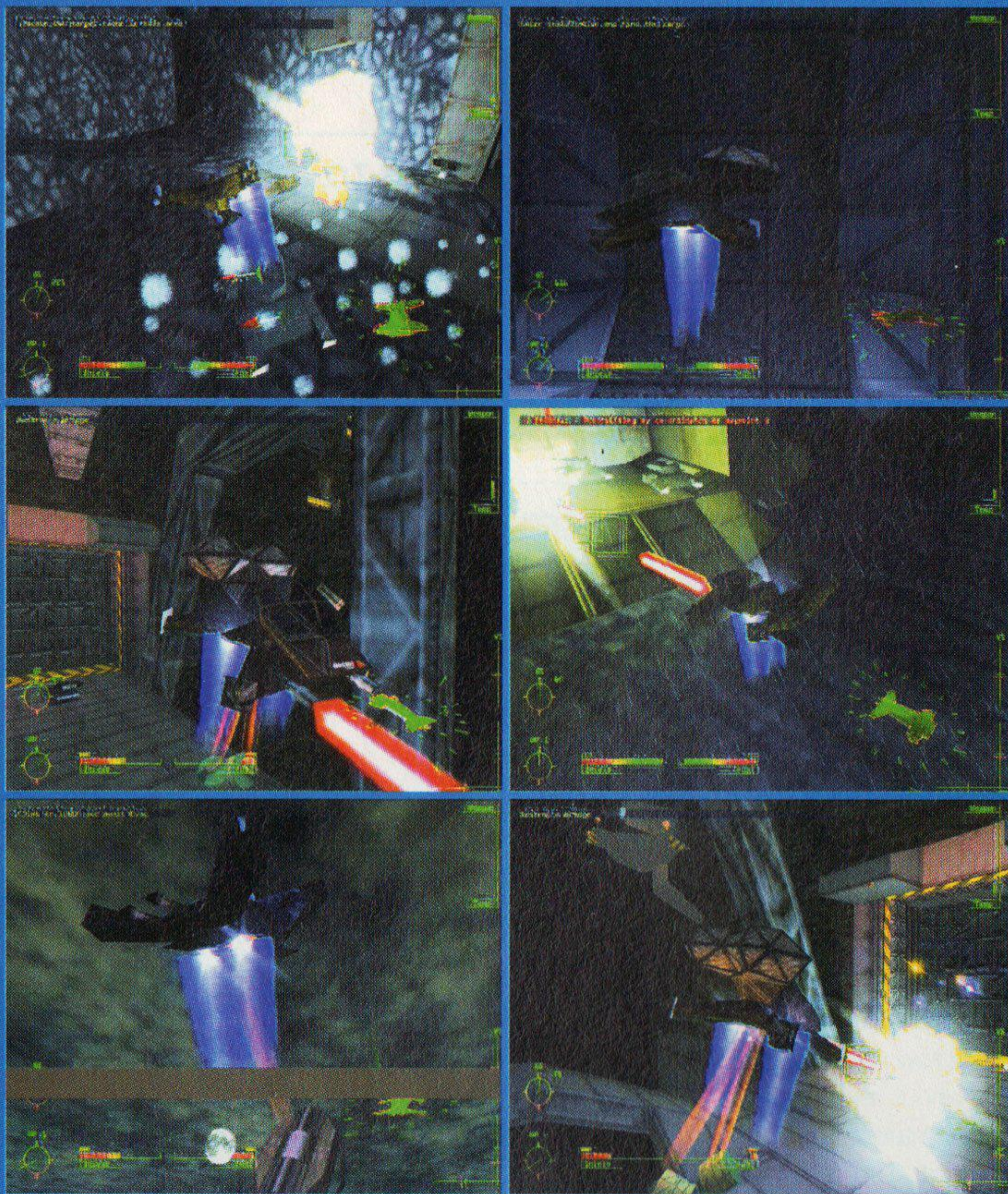
In fact, the only game currently in development for DVD-ROM release is *Lander* from Psygnosis. Many people will be watching this new game to see how it does, but Psygnosis are taking no chances. They are also releasing the game on CD-ROM.

There are plenty of movies available on DVD, and more are being added every day, but the future for computer games on the new format doesn't look too good at the moment. As more and more people get DVD-ROM drives for their PCs, no doubt software developers will start releasing titles designed to make full use of the format, but at present, there is precious little out there. **TC**



The focused laser reads the top layer of the disk, then moves on to the layer beneath, doubling the running time





LANDER

Troubled games publishers Psygnosis are pinning a lot of their corporate hopes on a new title called *Lander*, the first and so far only game to be designed for and released for DVD-ROM. *Lander* is a highly sophisticated game which has its genesis in one of the most venerable of all computer games, *Lunar Lander*. You have to pilot an interplanetary landing craft on a long series of missions throughout the solar system, exploring locations on Mars and Venus as well as the moons of the outer planets. Control of the craft is tricky, because it is a vertical take-off rocket powered craft and

does not hover well. Atmospheric and gravitational conditions on the various worlds are accurately modelled, based on scientific data gathered from NASA space probes. As the game progresses, you become aware of a vast plot involving governments and major companies in a vast conspiracy centred on the discovery of an alien artefact.

The game takes full advantage of the DVD format, with some awesome rendered animations and a full Dolby Digital soundtrack. With a decent speaker system and a Dolby 5.1 compatible soundcard, playing the game is quite an experience. The CD-ROM version is almost identical, but lacks the quality sound. *Lander* is due for release in February '99.



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Hard Stuff

Plenty more **hardware for you** to drool over this month, including **the first peripheral** to be **released for** the Dreamcast

Mad Catz Panther XL

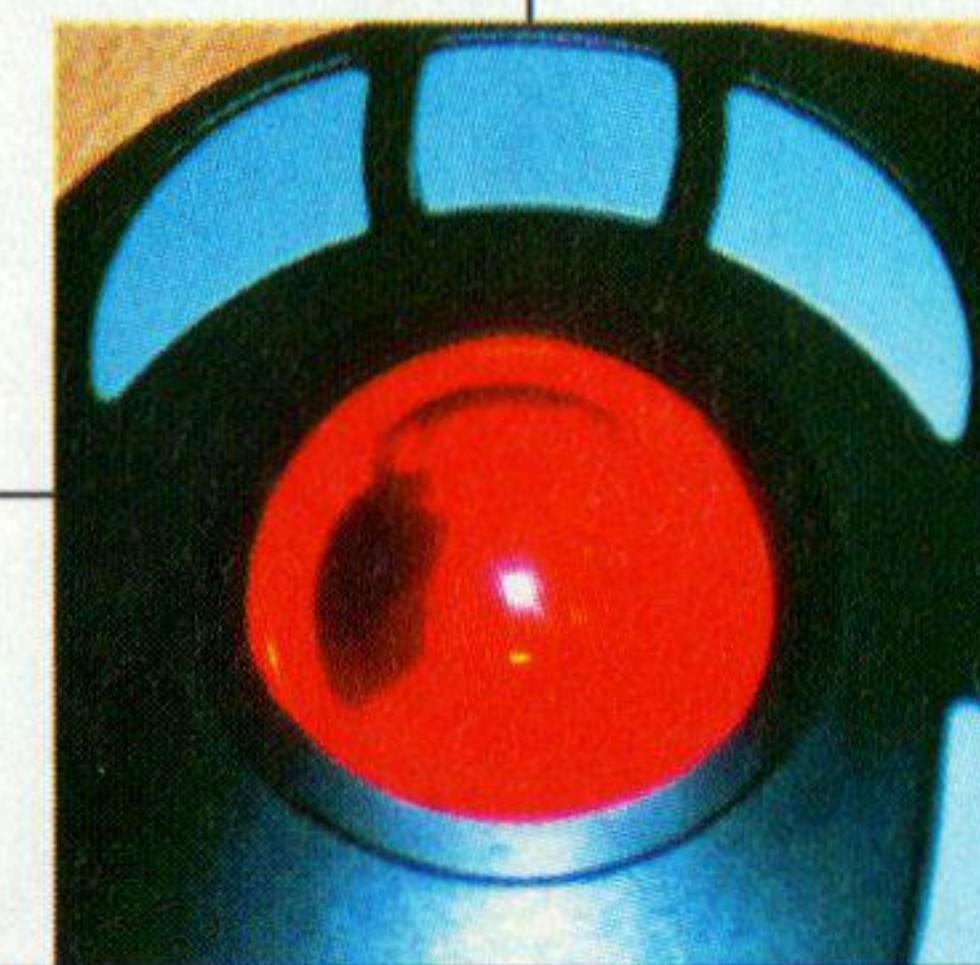
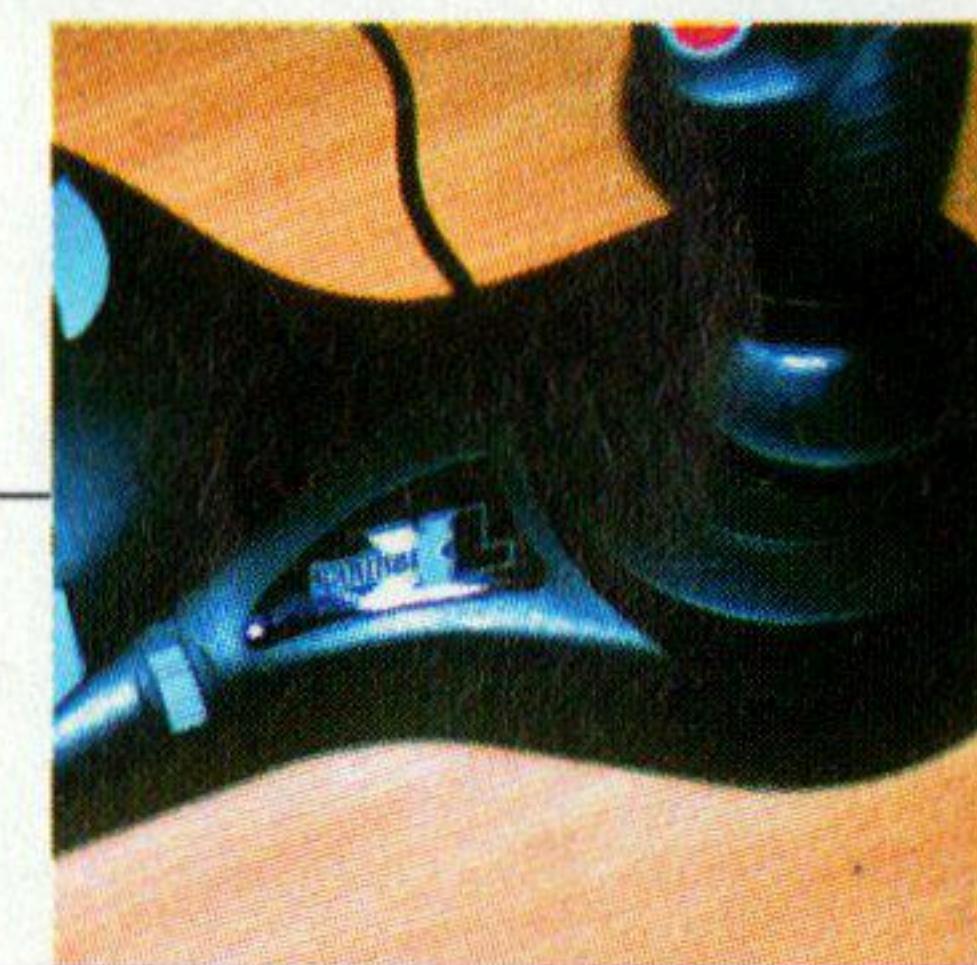
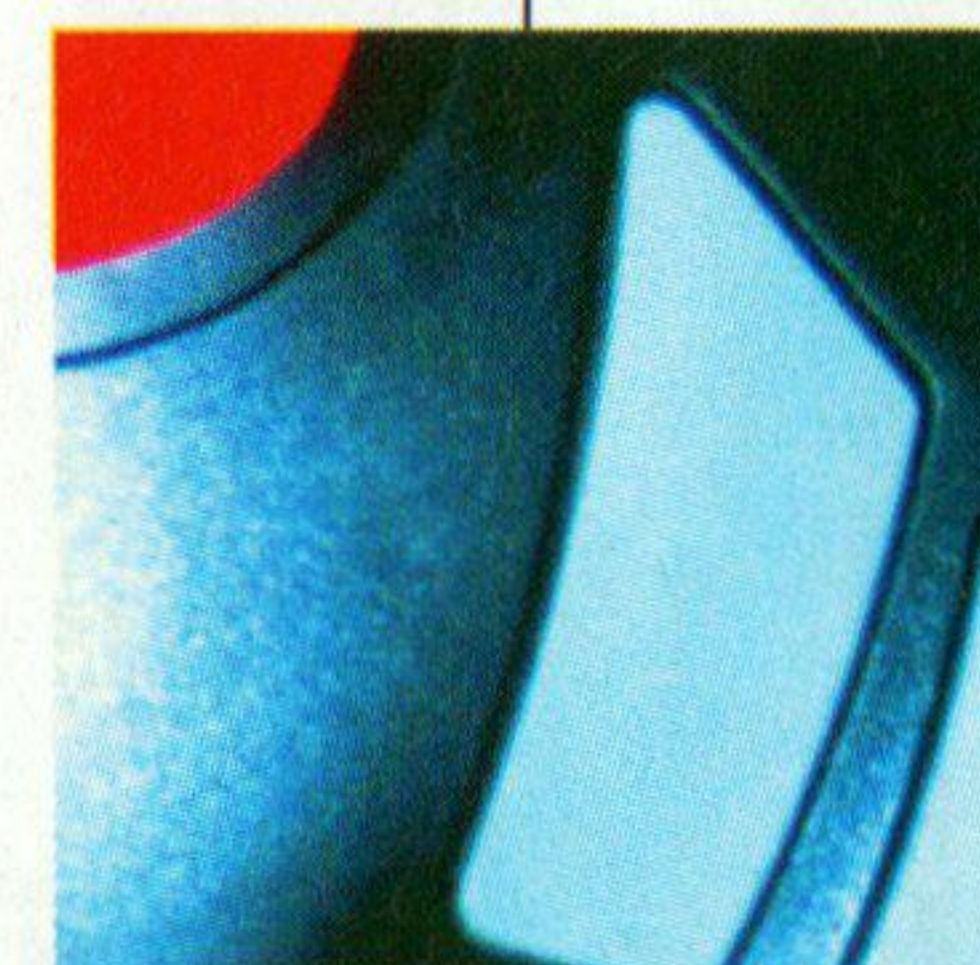
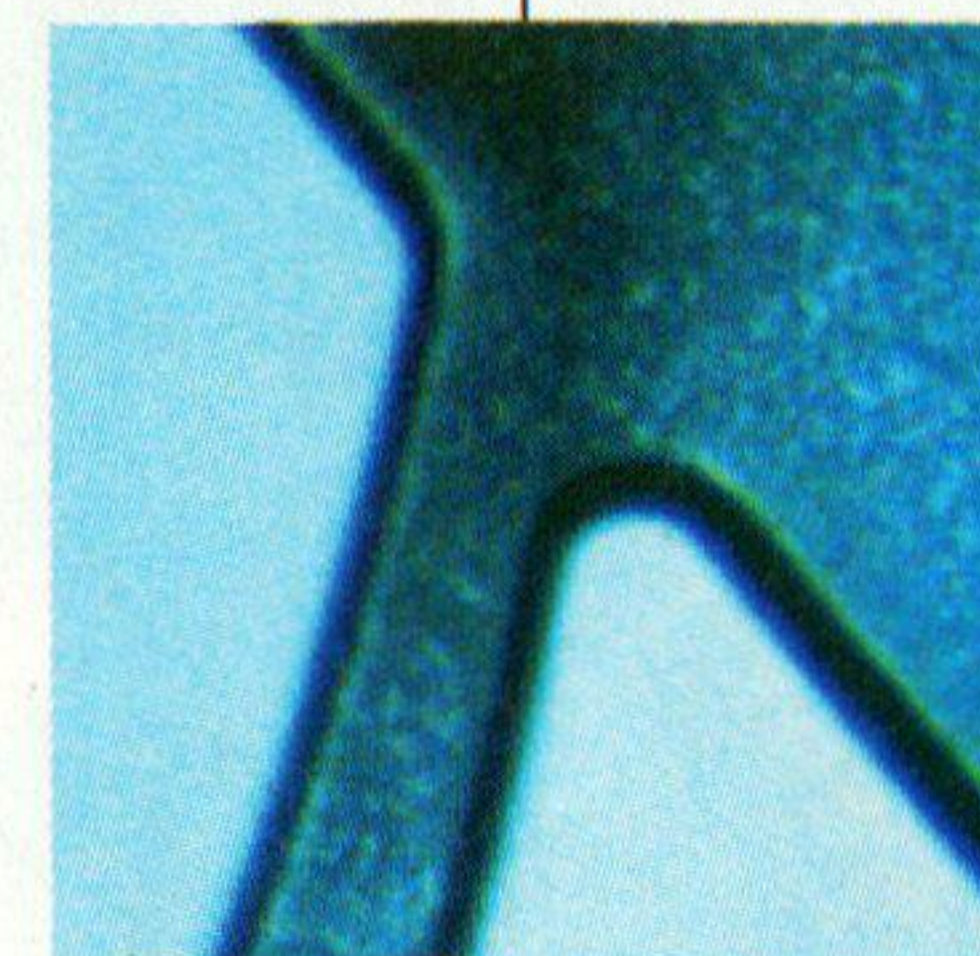
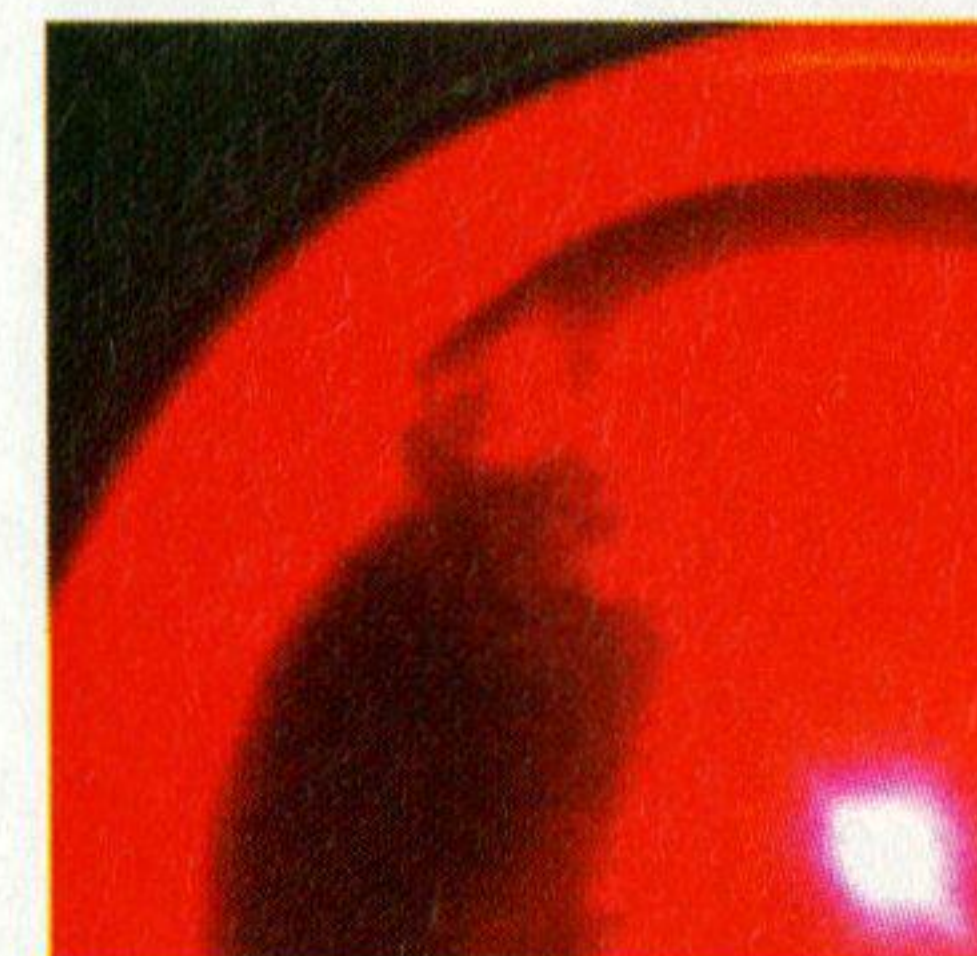
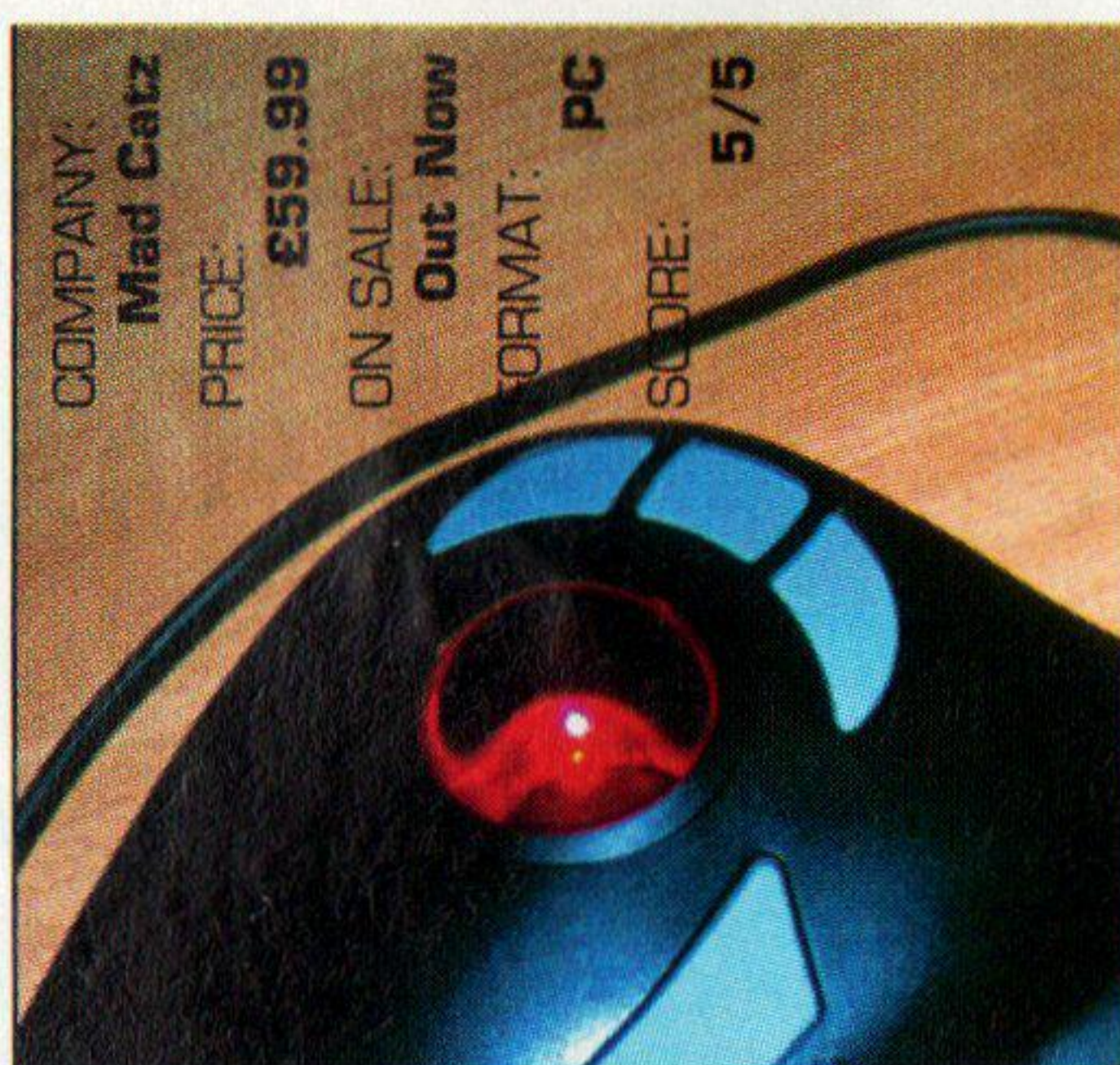
I first saw one of these gadgets at the E3 games show in Atlanta last year. It was being used for an on-line *Quake II* match, and I managed to have a brief go on it. I was immediately impressed by the look and feel of the device and by how well it worked with the 3D first-person game format.

The Panther XL controller consists of a solid, heavy base unit, with a large and comfortably moulded digital joystick on the right-hand side. The stick has four buttons and two hat-switches, giving a total of twelve buttons.

On the left is the unique selling point of the Panther XL – a glowing red trackball. The ball is made of a heavy gauge see-through red plastic and has red LEDs mounted underneath it. These lights are, of course, completely unnecessary, but they look great – especially if you are playing in a darkened room. Around the trackball are five more buttons and a thumb-wheel throttle control.

This is one of the most versatile controllers I have ever used. It is at its best when playing games like *Quake II* or *Unreal*, where the track ball is used for aiming and looking around while you move using the stick. The buttons can be assigned to different weapons, and the speed and precision with which you can move about and fire gives you a noticeable advantage in on-line deathmatches.

For other games, the Panther XL is just as good. The trackball doubles as a rudder control for flight sims and other such games, and can even be used to emulate a three button mouse. This is an extremely well-made piece of kit and looks great. It's not cheap, but it is excellent value for the money, and you will never need another joystick.



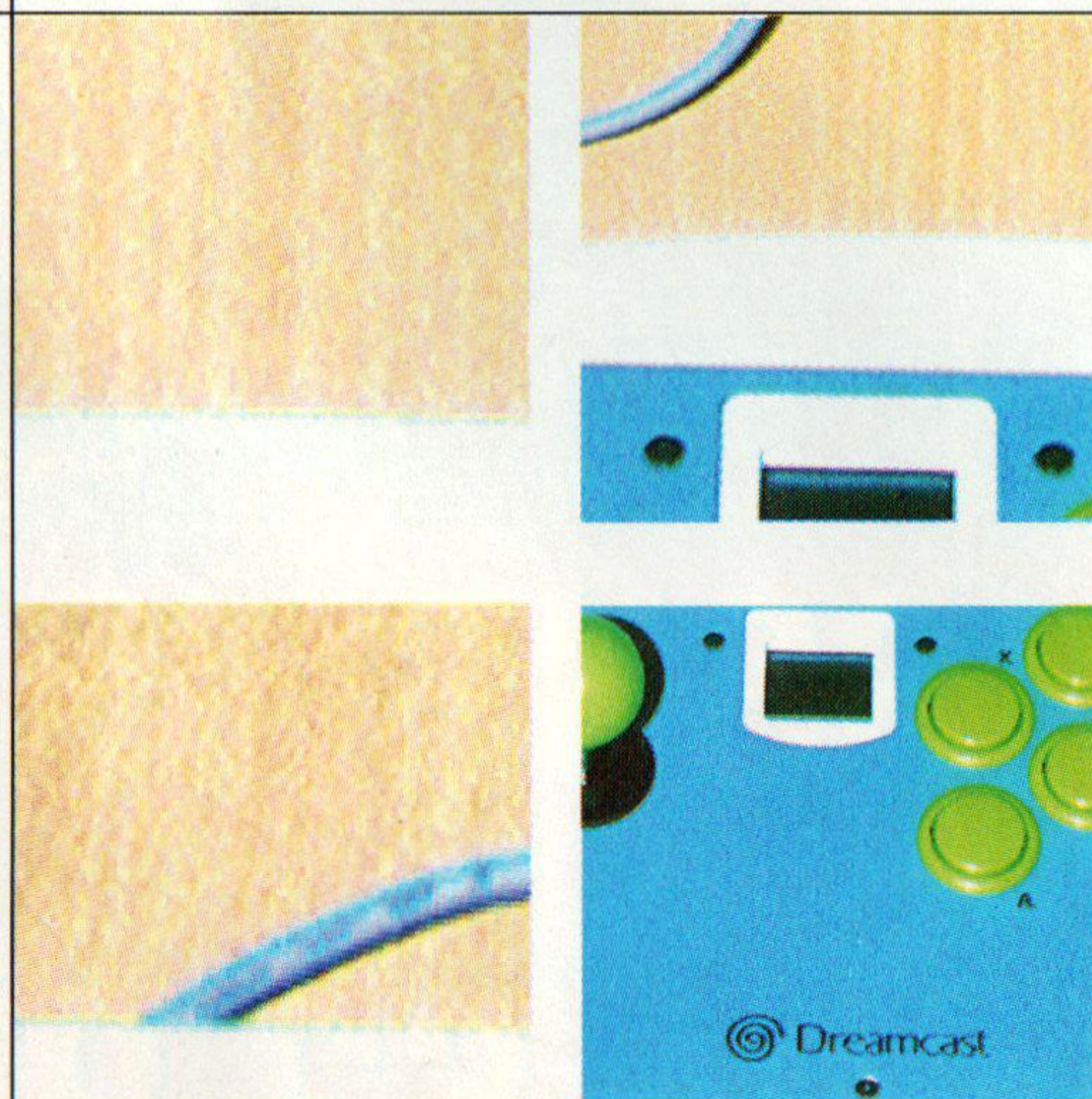
Dreamcast Arcade Stick

Well, here it is, the first official Dreamcast peripheral to come through our doors, and it's a beauty. As soon as you pick it up, you can tell it is a product of the highest quality. The casing is made of heavy-duty polycarbonate plastic and powder-coated steel plates, and feels strong enough to demolish houses with. The joystick is mounted on a thick steel post, set in strong low-friction nylon bearings. The eight-way microswitches can be heard clicking as you move the stick around, and the action is smooth but positive.

The large green buttons are identical to those found in full-size arcade machines, so they should withstand a lifetime of pounding. The front of the unit has a slot for one VMS and approximately two meters of cable.

As with similar devices for other consoles, this arcade stick is designed mostly for beat-'em-up type games such as *Virtua Fighter*, so the lack of an analogue stick is no handicap. There will be analogue joysticks available soon.

If you have already paid out a large wedge of cash for an imported Dreamcast, you probably won't mind the rather steep price tag. Rest assured, you would be buying the best arcade stick available for any format.

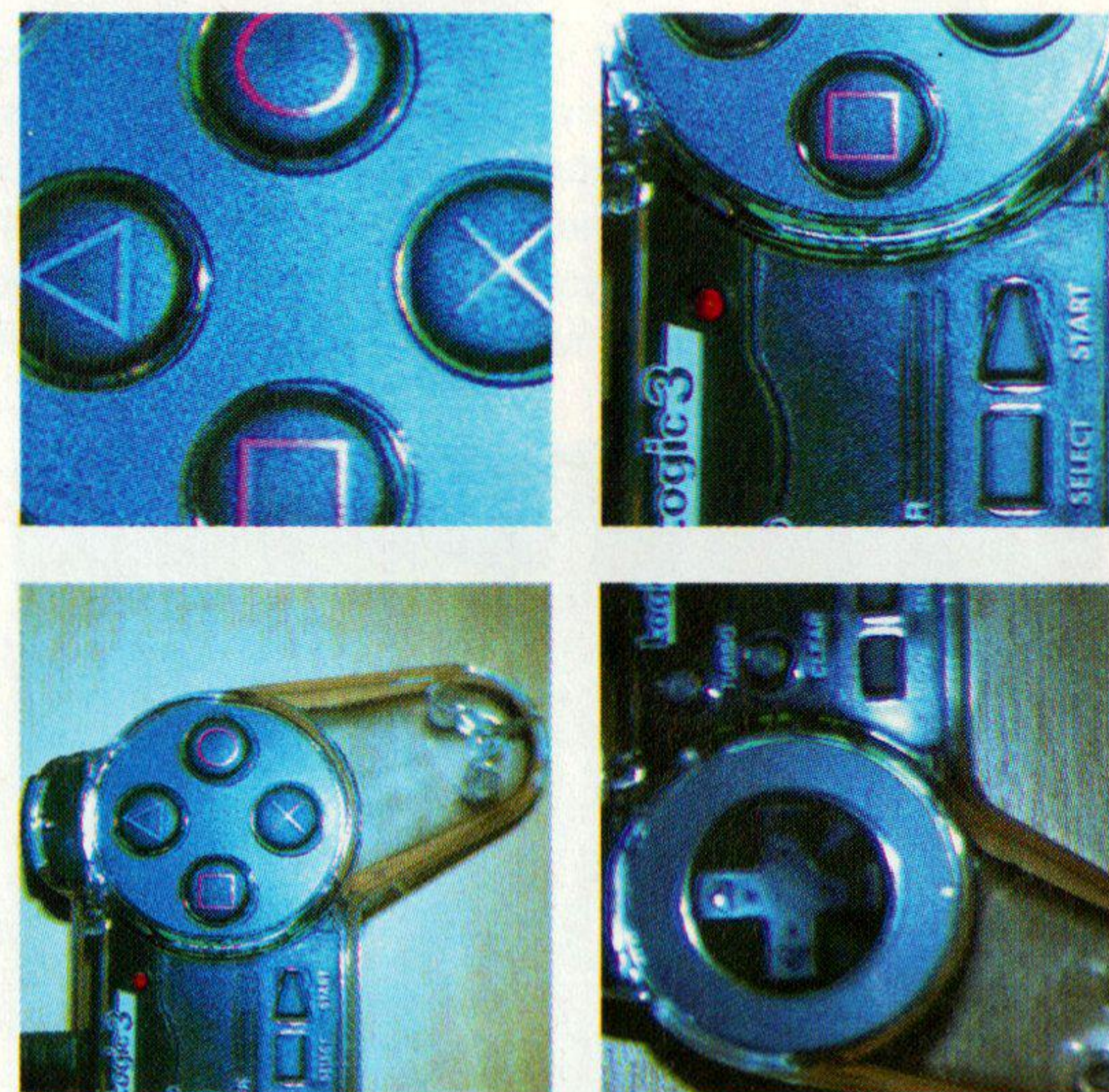
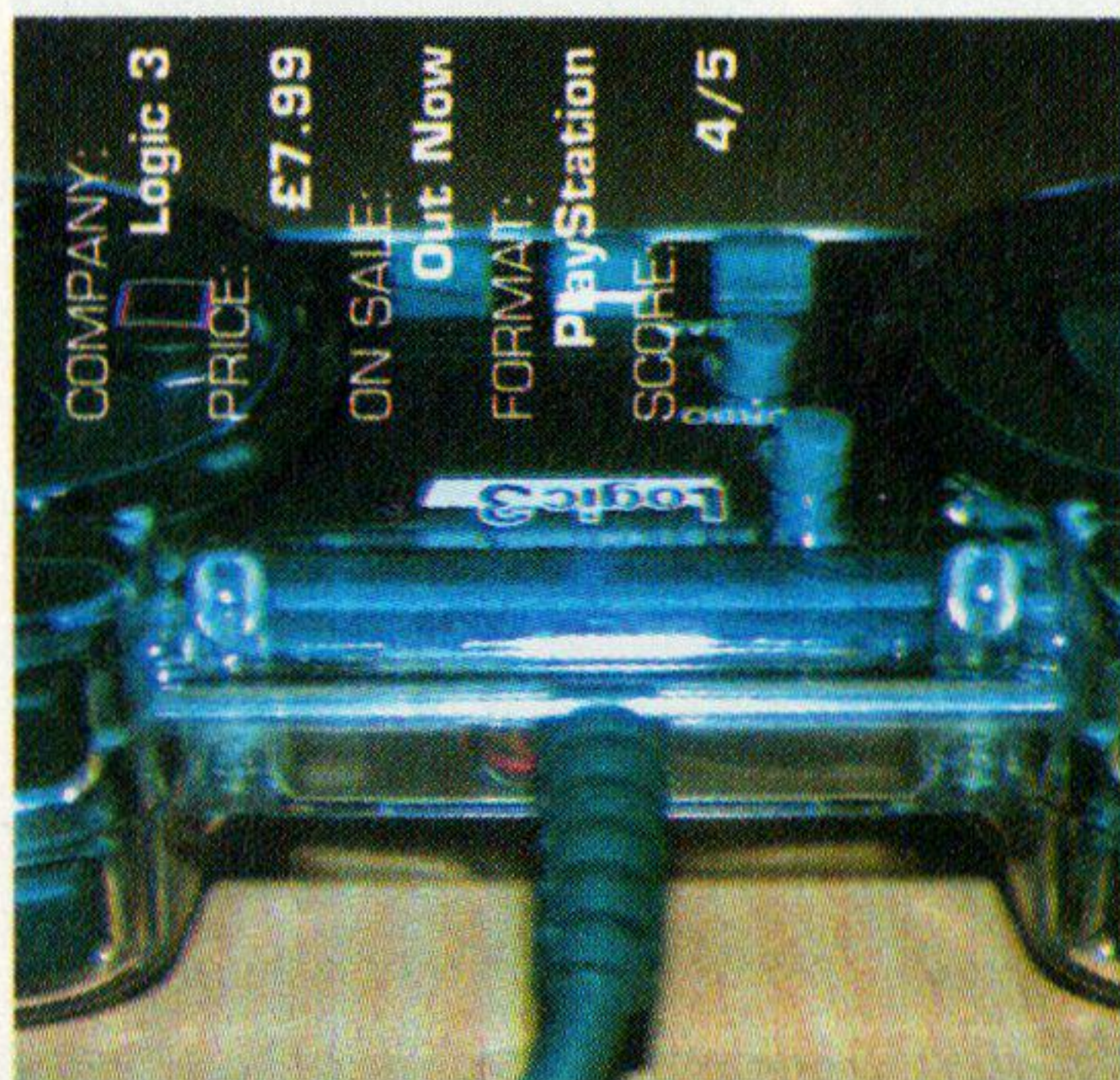


Logic 3 Speed Pad

Although this pad looks cheap and nasty at first glance, don't be deceived. The Logic 3 Speed Pad is one of the most solidly constructed third-party PlayStation controllers on the market. The moulding of its transparent plastic case is first class. There are no sharp edges or gaps, and the whole thing is put together very well.

The dimensions of the Speed Pad are almost identical to those of a standard controller, and the four main buttons are also the same as an official Sony unit. The eight-way D-pad has a single tilting button rather than four direction buttons of an official controller. I know some people hate this type of D-pad, but I rather like it. The five buttons in the middle of the yoke are start, select, clear, slow and turbo. I don't know why manufacturers continue to put 'slow' and 'turbo' buttons on their controllers, as there are very few games which will accept them. Still there they are. The yoke buttons are a bit too soft and rubbery for me, but they work well enough.

The cable on the Speed Pad is a bit on the short side at about one and a half meters, but that is my only real gripe with what is a remarkably good bit of kit, especially at the price.

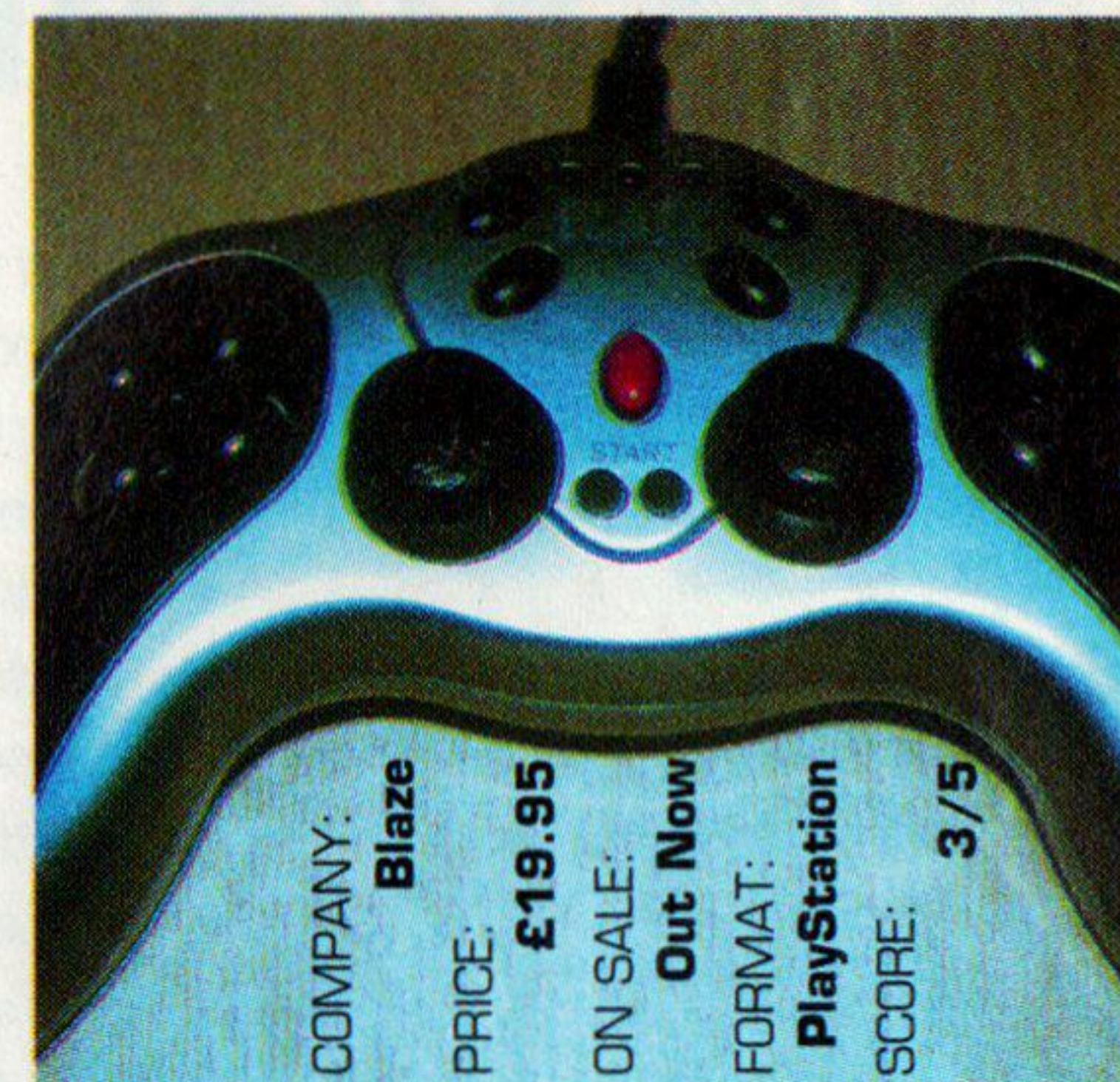


Cyber Shock

As one of the recipients of a legal rocket from Sony, Blaze have been in a hurry to bring out a PlayStation controller which looks nothing at all like the official product. The result is the Cyber Shock, and at first glance it looks pretty good.

The casing is finished in an attractive black and brushed steel effect and the styling is sleek and futuristic. The Cyber Shock is slightly larger than a standard controller, and I found it comfortable to hold. However, the buttons are a bit of a problem. The four symbol buttons are small, domed and oval-shaped, and are too close together for most peoples' liking. It is difficult to hit one without pressing down two others at the same time. The D-pad is styled to match the buttons, which makes it an unusual shape, but it does work quite well once you get used to it. The analogue controls are smooth, but perhaps a little too light, and they have a unique feature. The button caps can be removed and replaced with four others of different shapes to suit your preference. The vibration motors are not the most powerful in the world and produce more of a rattle than a shock.

Overall, this is not a bad attempt to make a non-standard controller, but it has its problems



Blaster Light Gun Pro

Many light guns in the past have attempted to use some form of recoil powered by a mains supply to portray the action. The Blaster Light Gun Pro is the first to use Force Feedback, which removes the need for an extra plug socket, as well as the loud, annoying noise that was associated with the kick back from the previous guns, while still delivering a large recoil effect.

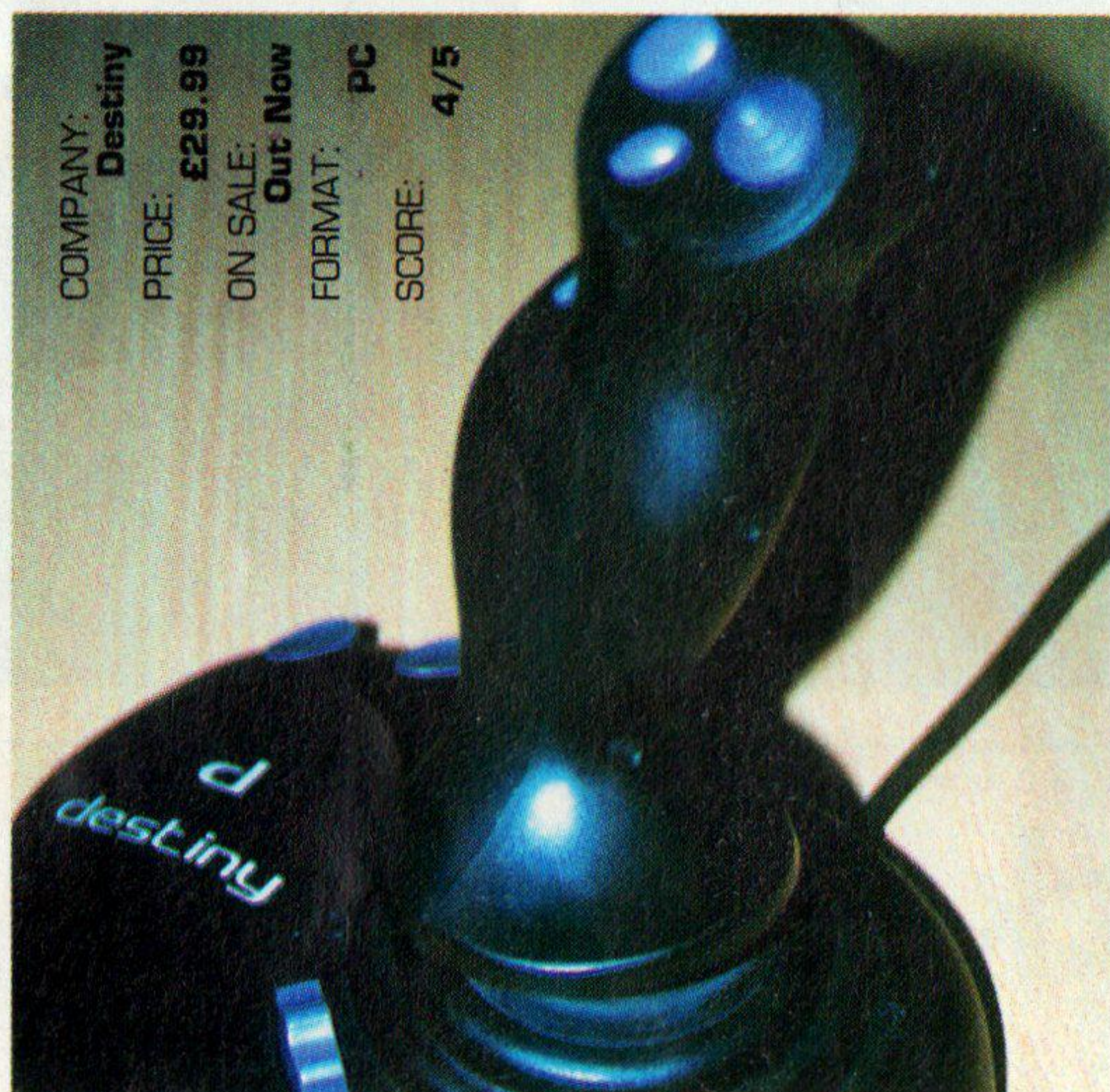
While feeling very nice with a good weight, tests of the gun with *Point Blank* and its sequel were disappointing – often shots aimed at the middle of the screen registered as if they were fired in the opposite direction, wasting ammo and time. It's a nice design, but scores poorly for unreliability.

The device has a built in guncon adapter for easy connection and a range of up to two metres.



Destiny D5

Destiny have settled nicely into the middle of the hardware market in terms of both price and quality. As an example of this philosophy, the Destiny D5 Joystick is a very reasonable piece of kit. The sturdy and comfortable stick houses twisting rudder/turret control, four fire buttons and a four way point-of-view Hat Switch. It has quite a large range of movement on it, which may not suit everyone, but this can be set indirectly by reconfiguration. Notice the ergonomics of the other four buttons on the base and the position of the throttle control and you'll

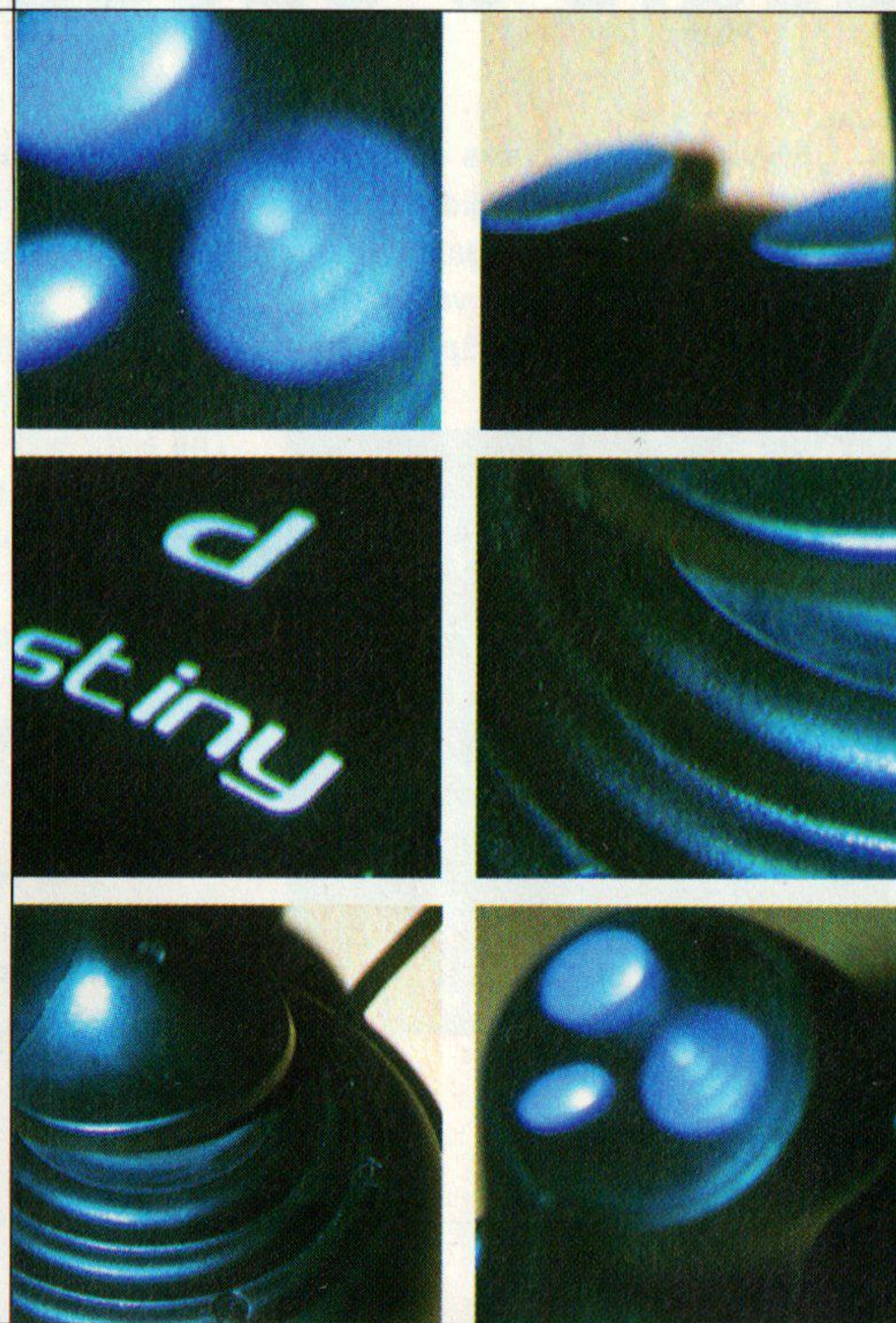


COMPANY: **Destiny**
PRICE: **£29.99**
ON SALE: **Out Now**
FORMAT: **PC**
SCORE: **4/5**

realise that it has been designed to keep the player's hand over the base at all times. This is still essential even if you are not using any of those buttons, because due to the fact that the base of the stick is so light, in a hectic game requiring a lot of stick movement it gets noticeably top-heavy.

The Destiny D5 joystick hasn't been designed with left-handed games players in mind, and unfortunately there's no option to change that setting. Also the base buttons seem to be too far up the pad, effectively moving your palm so that it's not covering the base.

Overall it's very nice piece of kit, and extremely good value – exactly what you'd expect for your £30



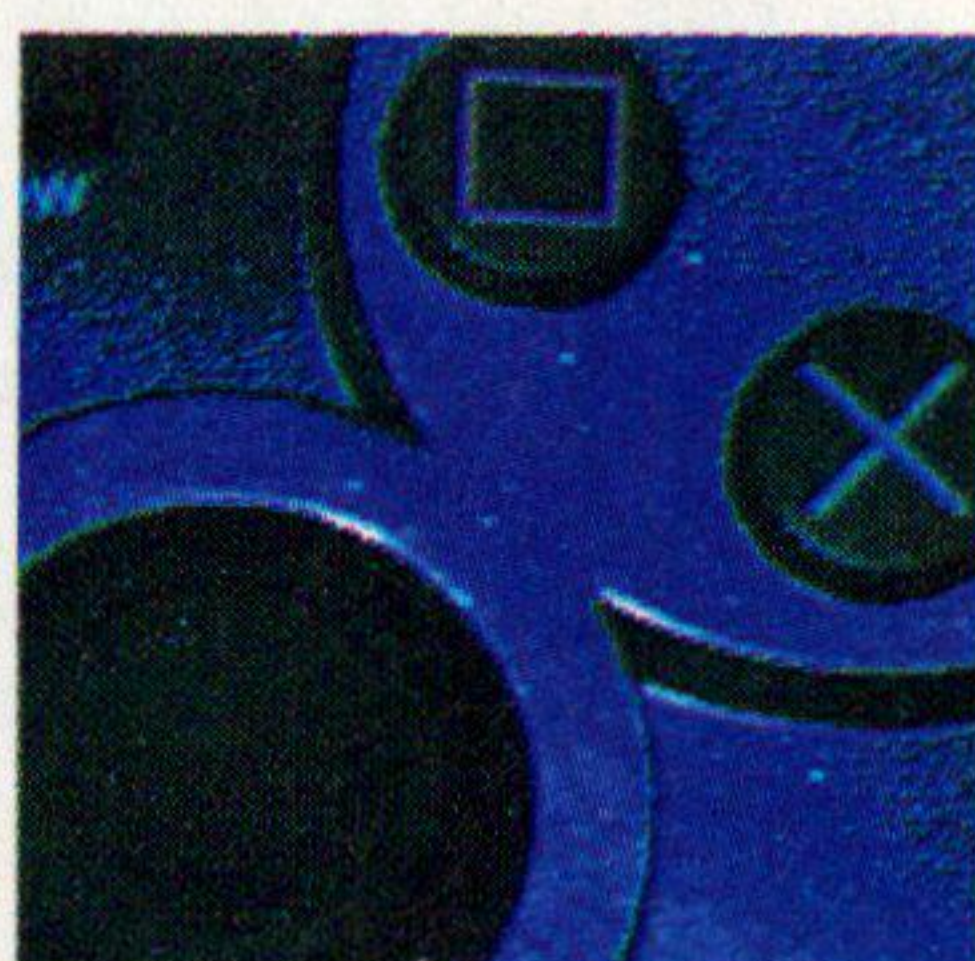
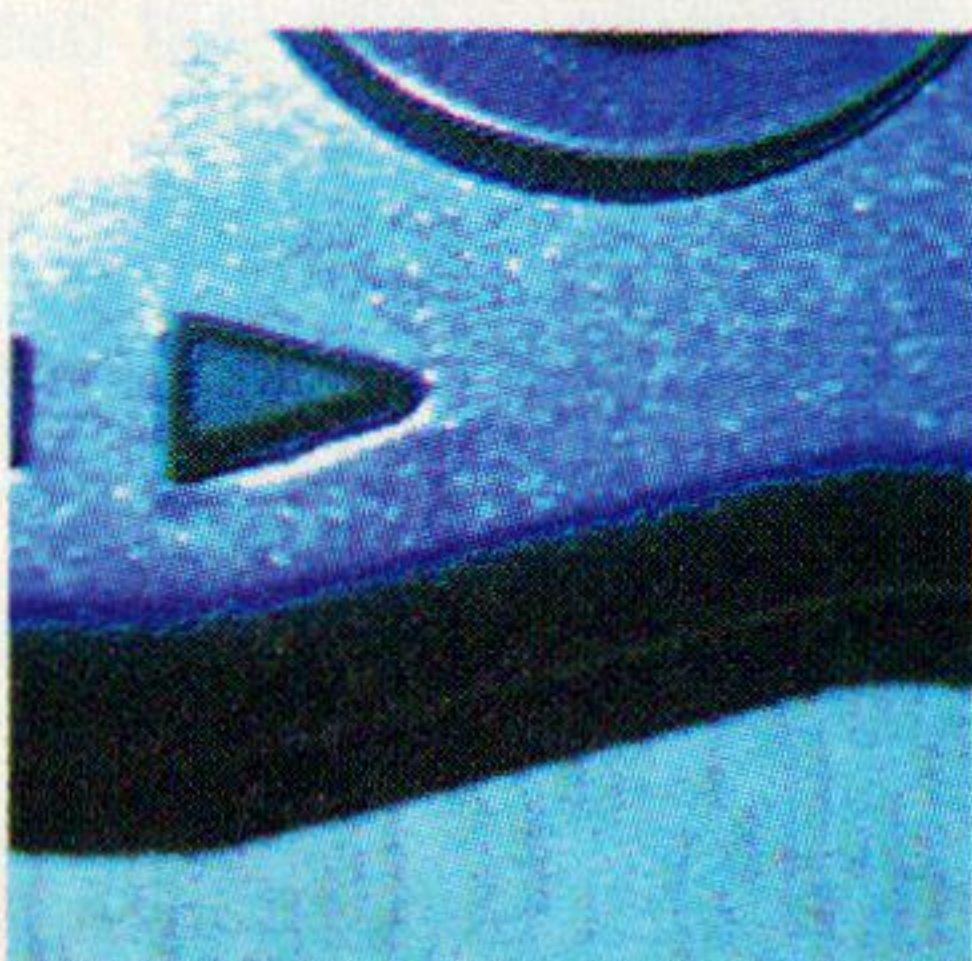
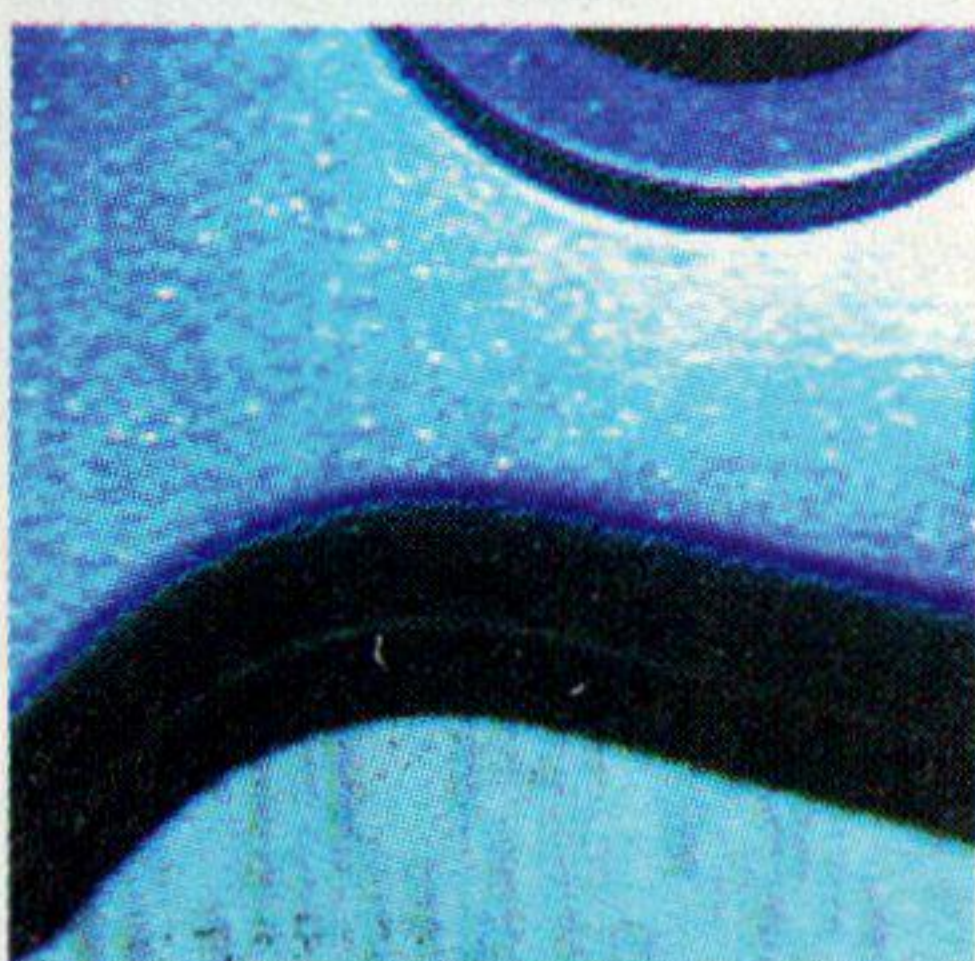
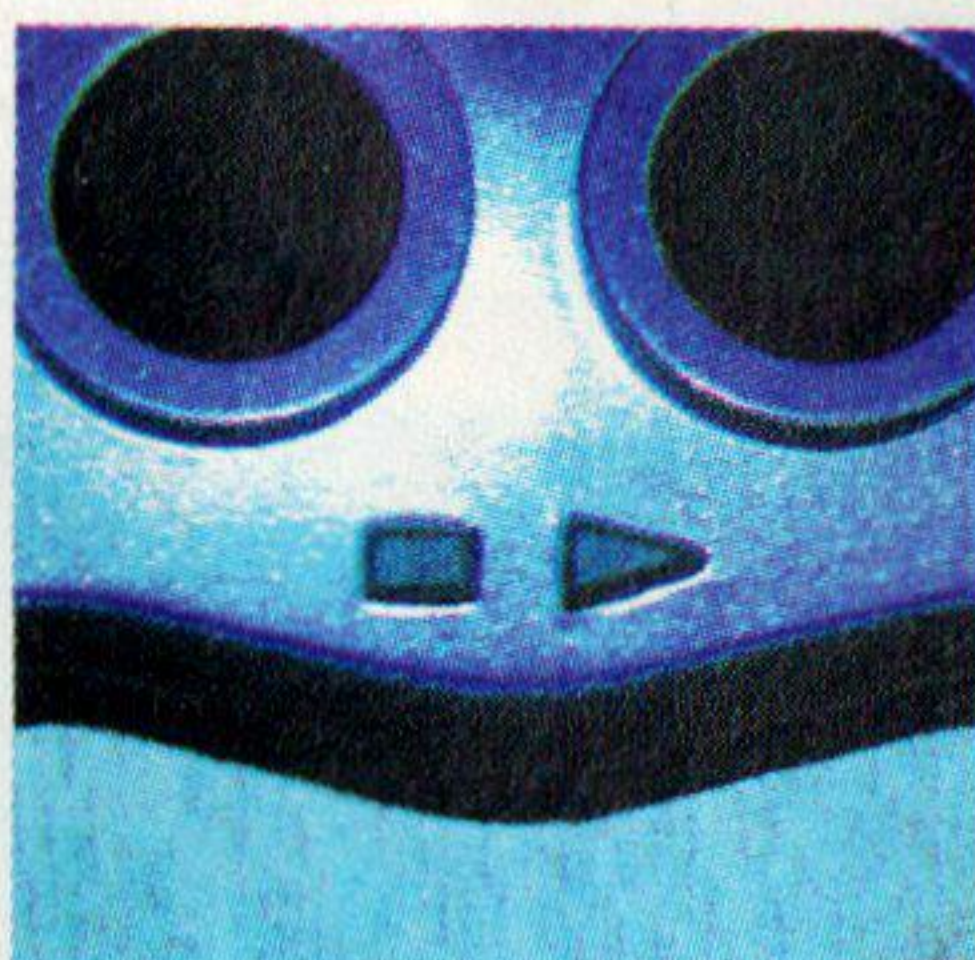
Shockhammer

Since Sony started getting litigious with third party developers, there has been a move towards proprietary original controller designs rather than funny-coloured copies of the official ones. One of the first and most distinctive is the Shockhammer from respected peripherals manufacturers, Thrustmaster.

First impressions are good. The Shockhammer controller looks good in its matt black and metal flake paint job, and it fits nicely into the hands; the large sculpted grips giving it a nice comfortable feel. The grips have a textured non-slip finish so sweaty hands won't slide about in the middle of a hectic game. The top buttons are identical in shape and relative position to the official analogue controller, but the twin joysticks are mounted on somewhat stiffer springs. The shoulder buttons are angled outwards, and are smaller and closer together than the official model, which could cause problems for some more enthusiastic gamers.

The build quality is not bad, but the casing does creak rather alarmingly if squeezed slightly hard. The black non-slip grip panels also seem to be a little bit on the loose side, but I couldn't persuade them to come off with any normal amount of physical abuse.

The only real letdown with this device is the vibration provided by the shock motors. With a name like Shockhammer, I was expecting something pretty radical, but in fact I had to check twice to make sure the thing was actually working. The vibration is so weedy you'll hardly notice it. This is a bit of a shame, because apart from that one flaw this is a well-designed controller.



COMPANY: **Thrustmaster**
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SCORE: **4/5**

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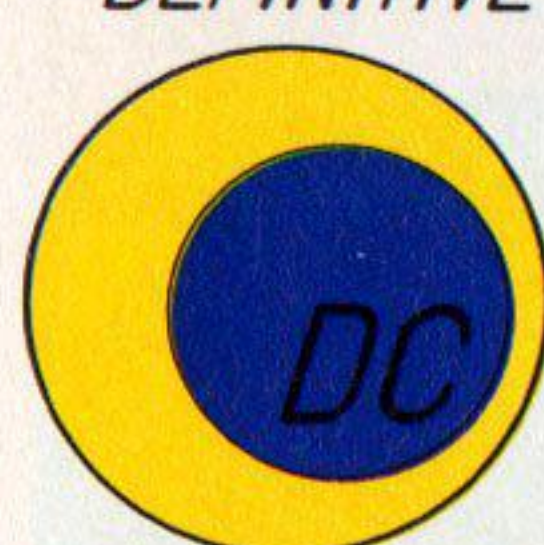
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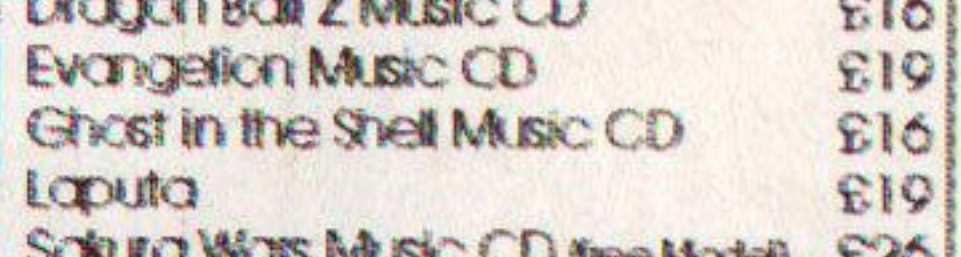
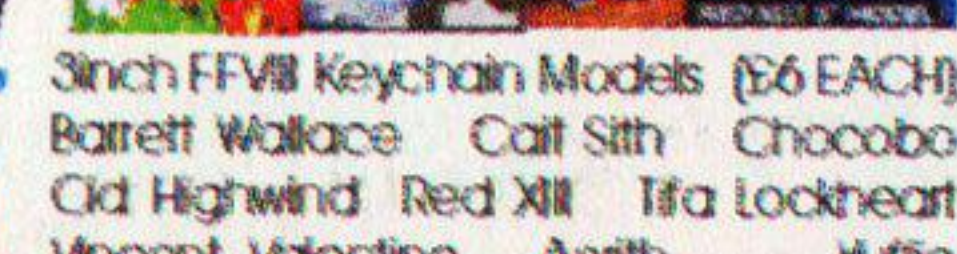
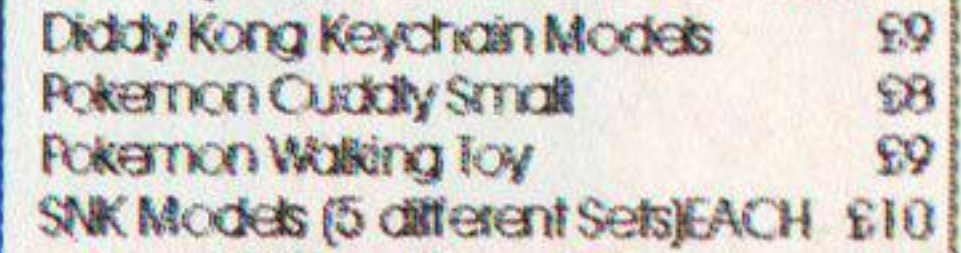
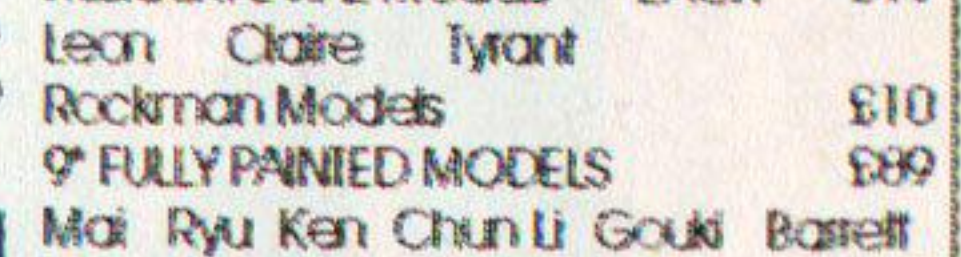
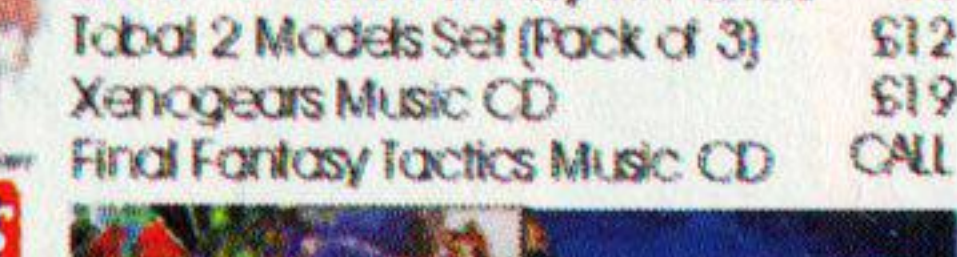
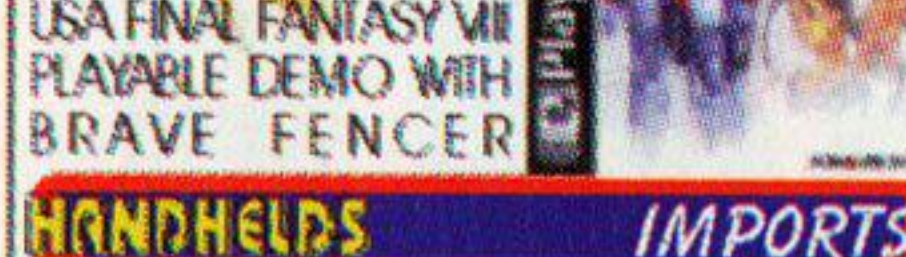
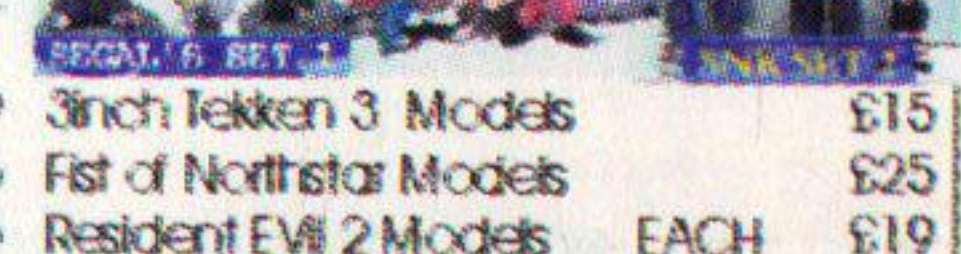
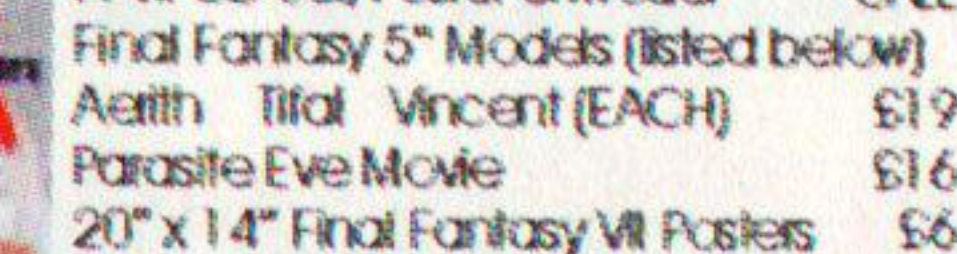
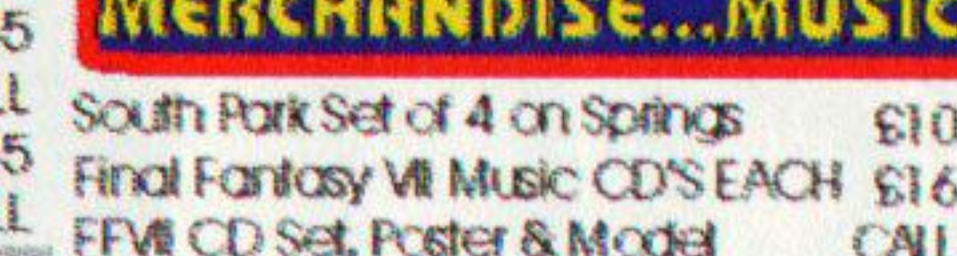
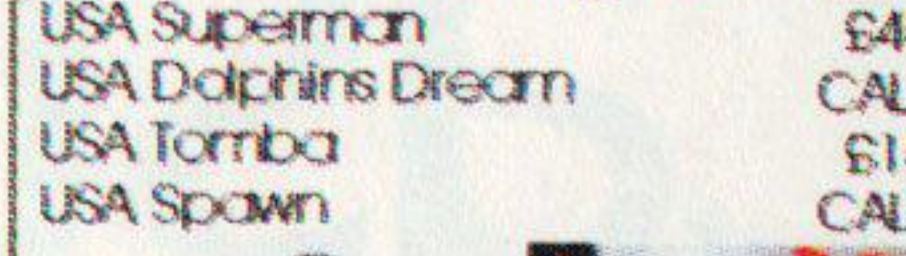
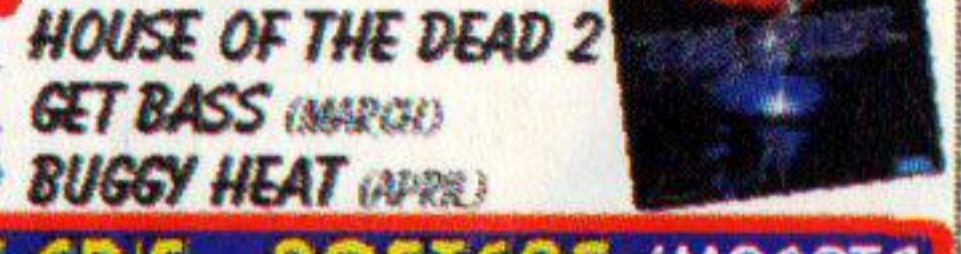
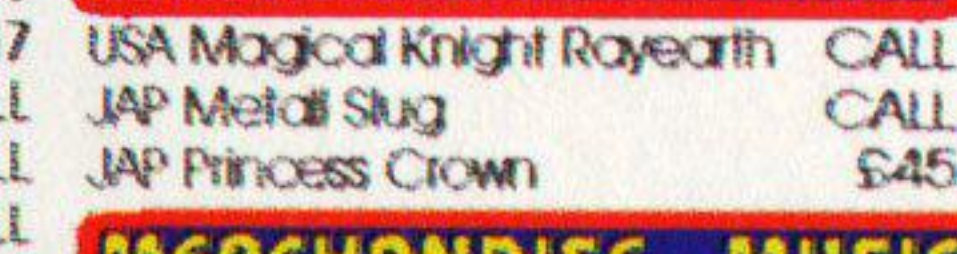
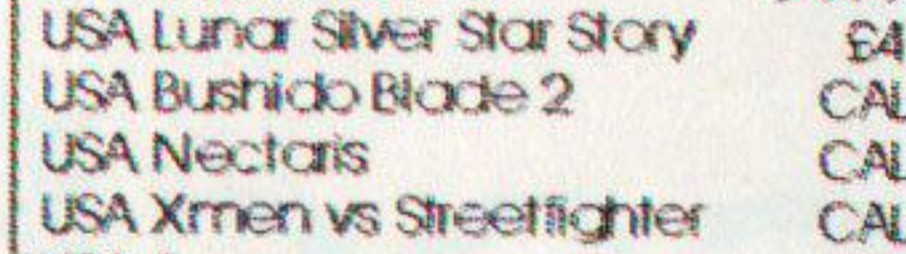
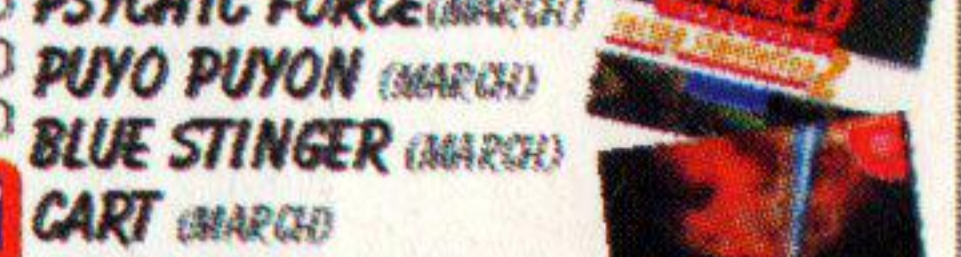
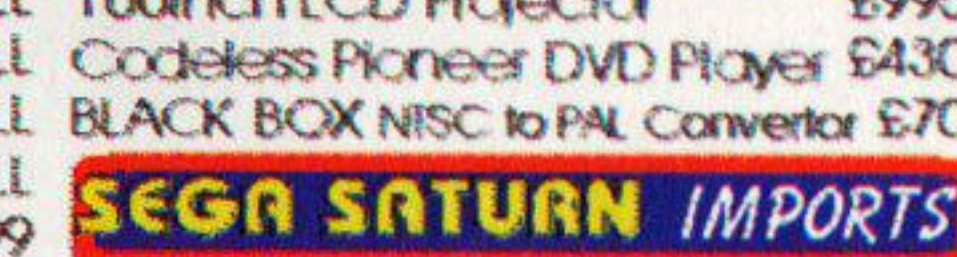
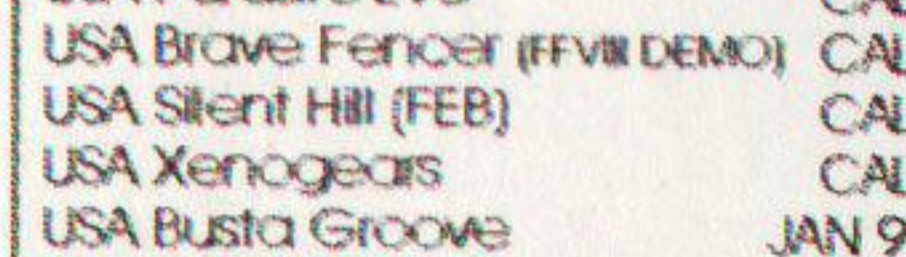
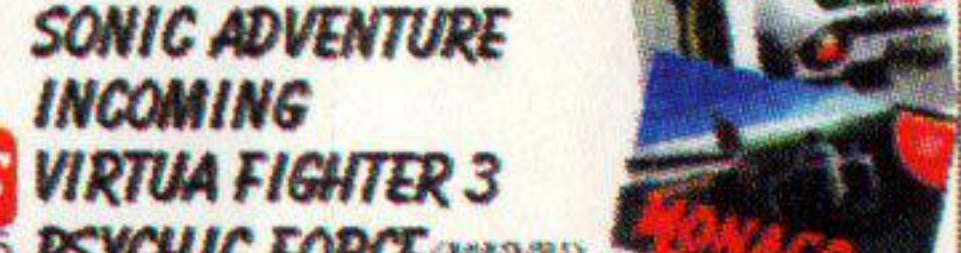
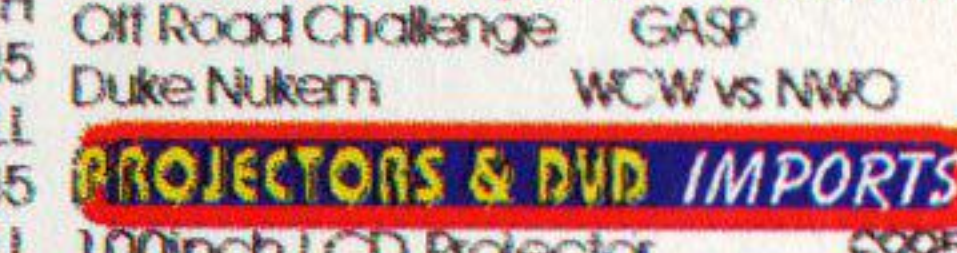
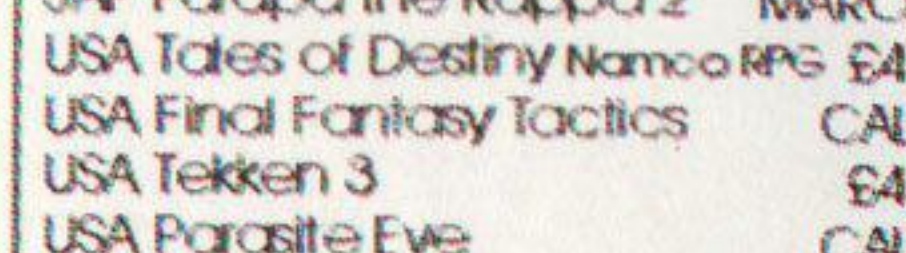
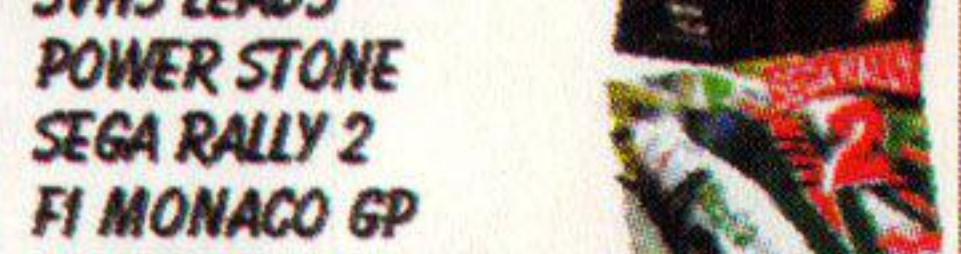
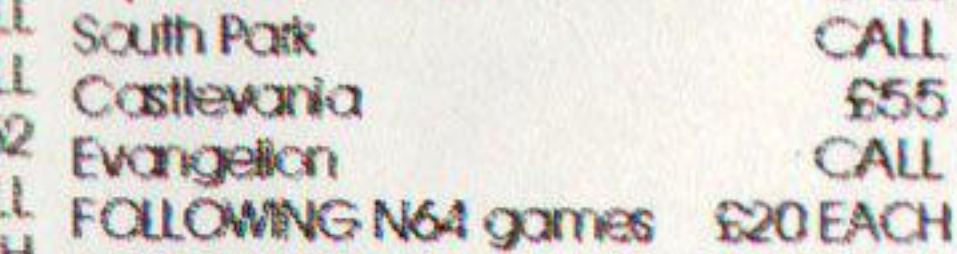
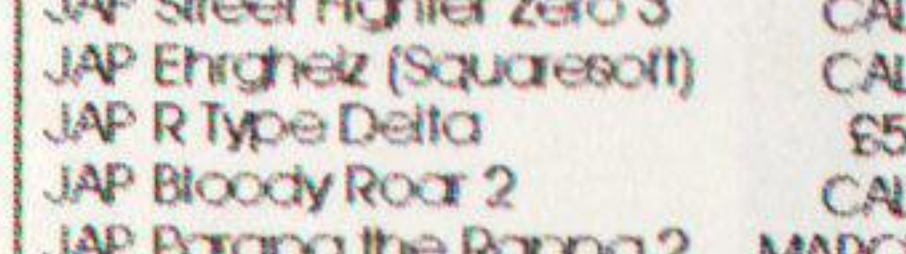
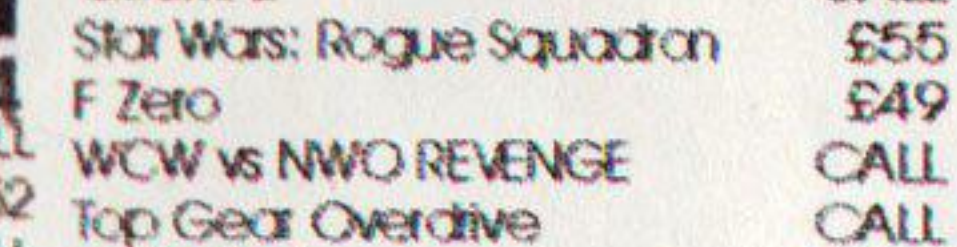
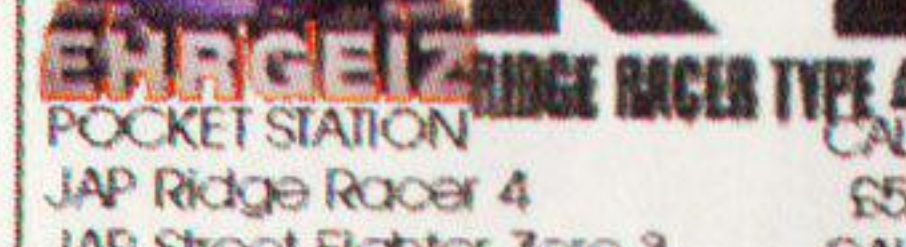
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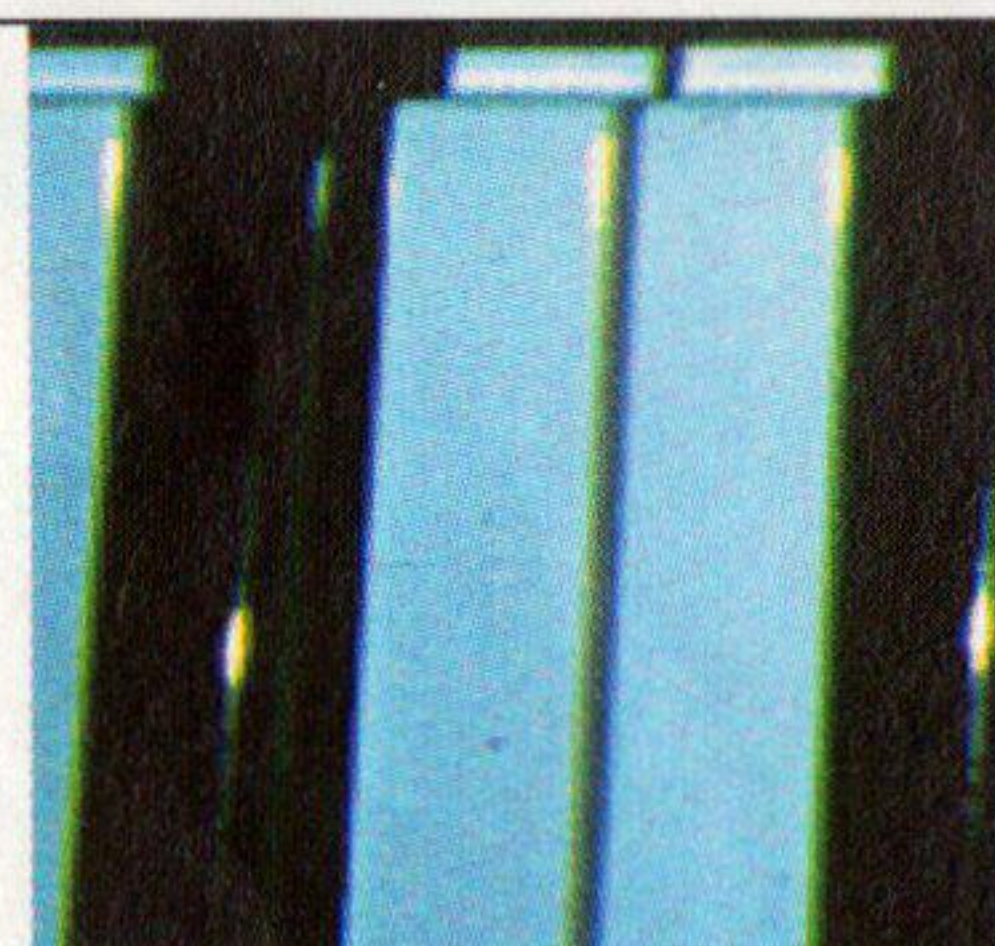
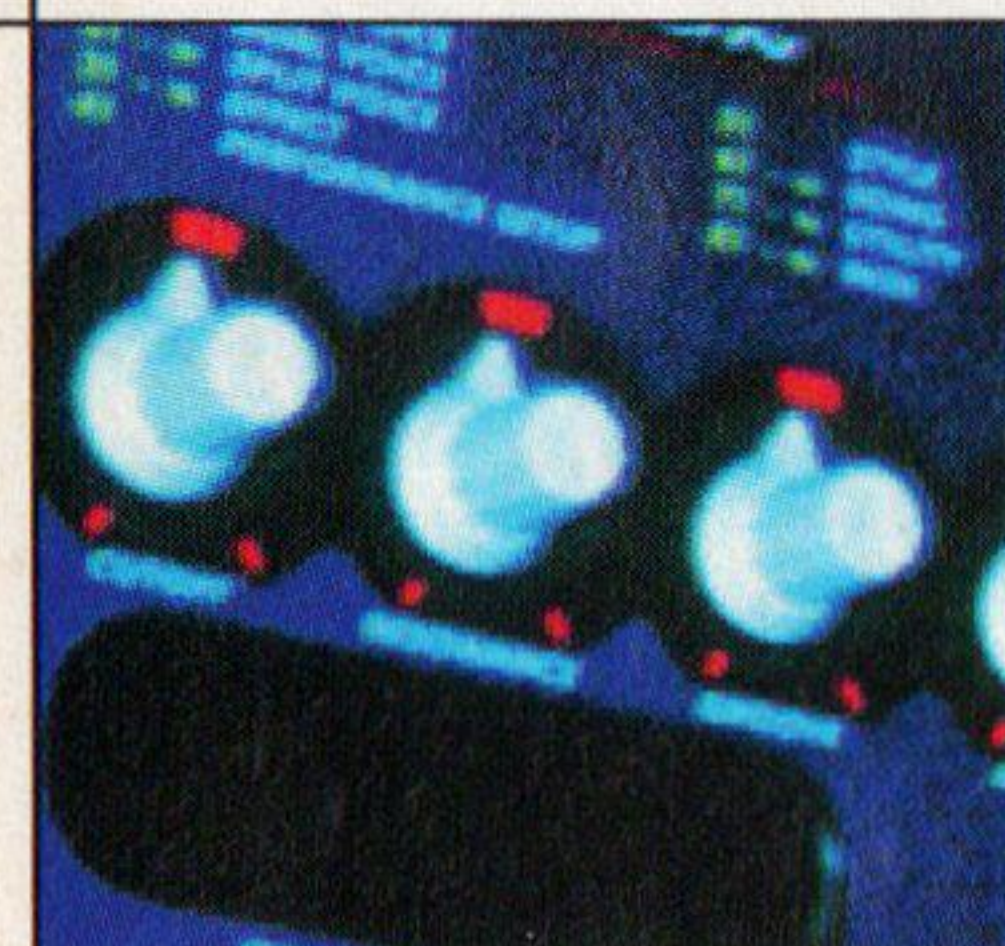
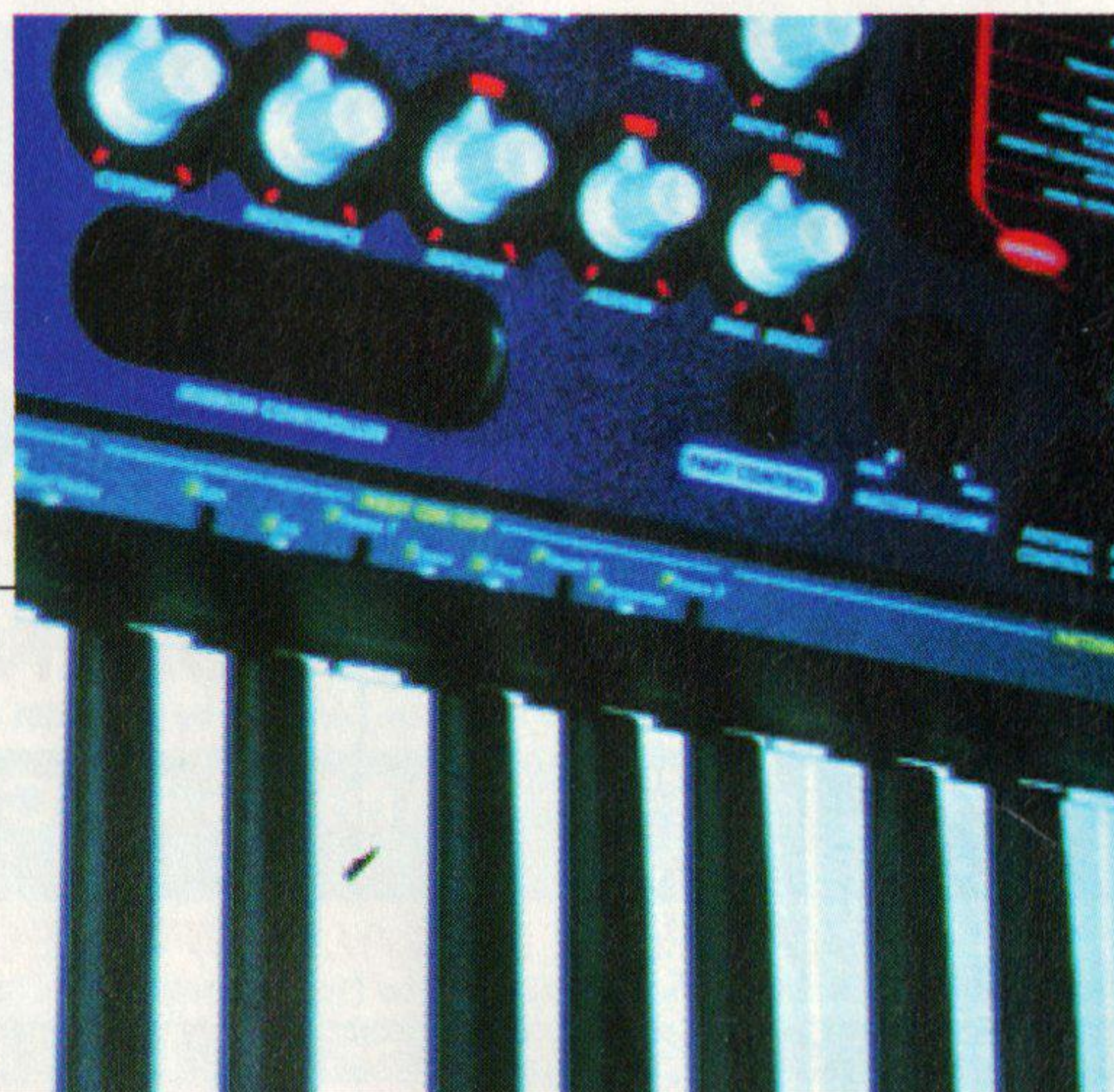
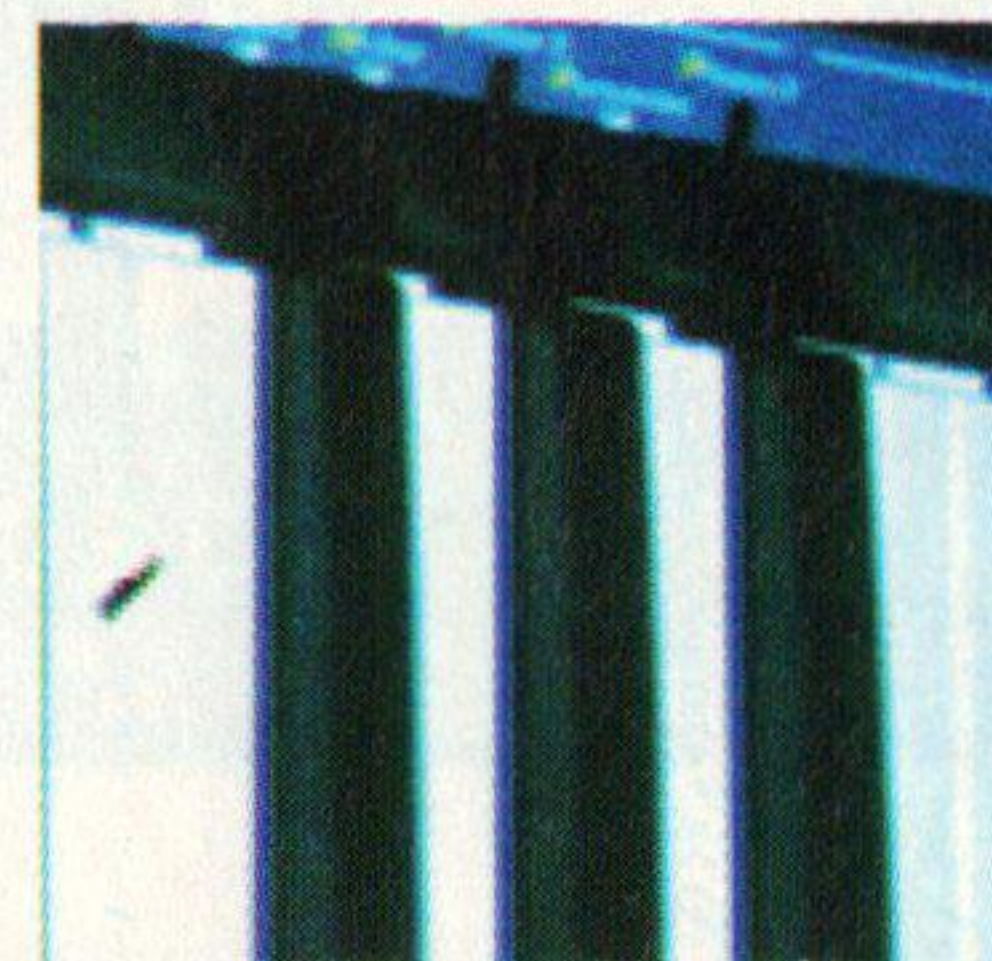
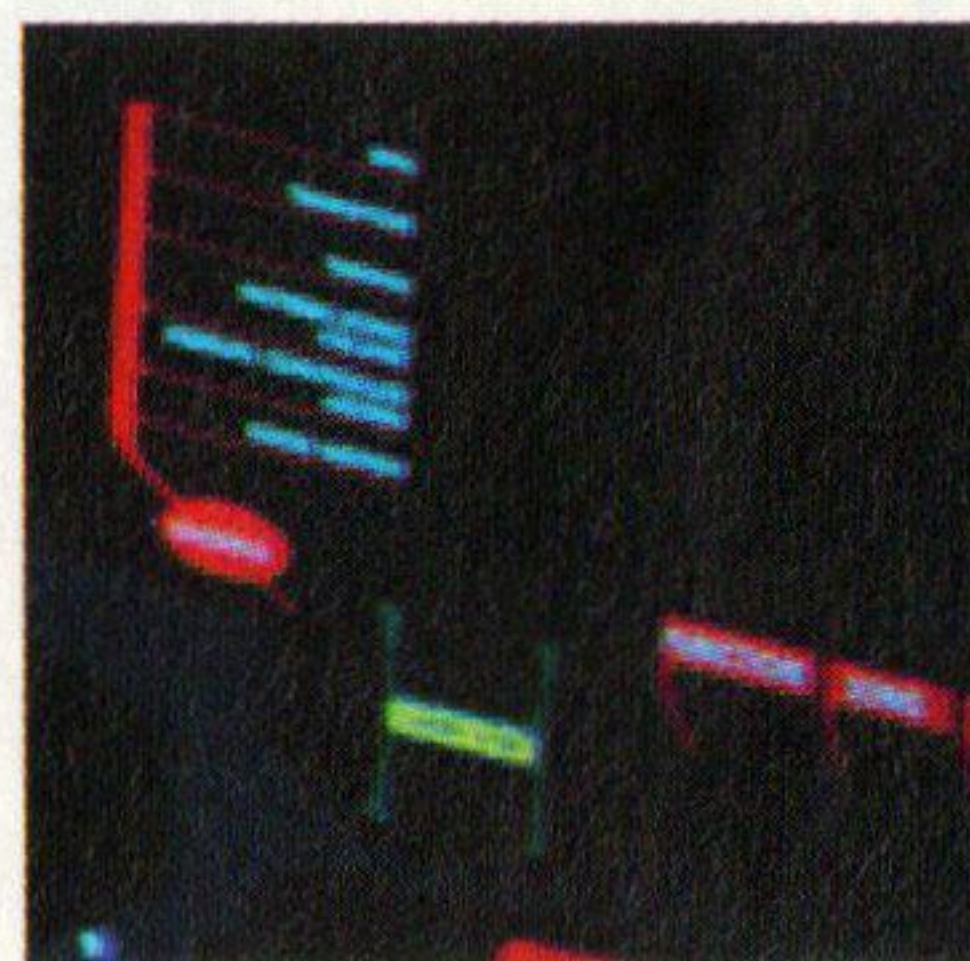
Yamaha DJX



The Yamaha DJX is fairly basic package. The keyboard offers the user plenty of pre-programmed drum loops and styles of music. These pretty much cover all forms of dance music including house, hip-hop and techno, but with an unfair leaning to swing styles of music. As you would expect, what's on offer is somewhat cheesy – no one with any real love of the genres here will find the music that stimulating.

The keyboard has a good selection of voices, both classical and dance driven, and the DJX has analogue controls that affect the cut off, resonance and assignment. There is also a digital sampler which can record a ten second sample from an external source.

For the money, the Yamaha DJX gives a good all-round performance at an affordable price. This includes various line in and out connections and a midi connection, so linking to a PC isn't too much of a problem. The sound quality is average, but the speakers manage to generate a decent amount of bass. Not for the serious musician – the keyboard is limited – but it offers a reasonable distraction for anyone that way inclined.



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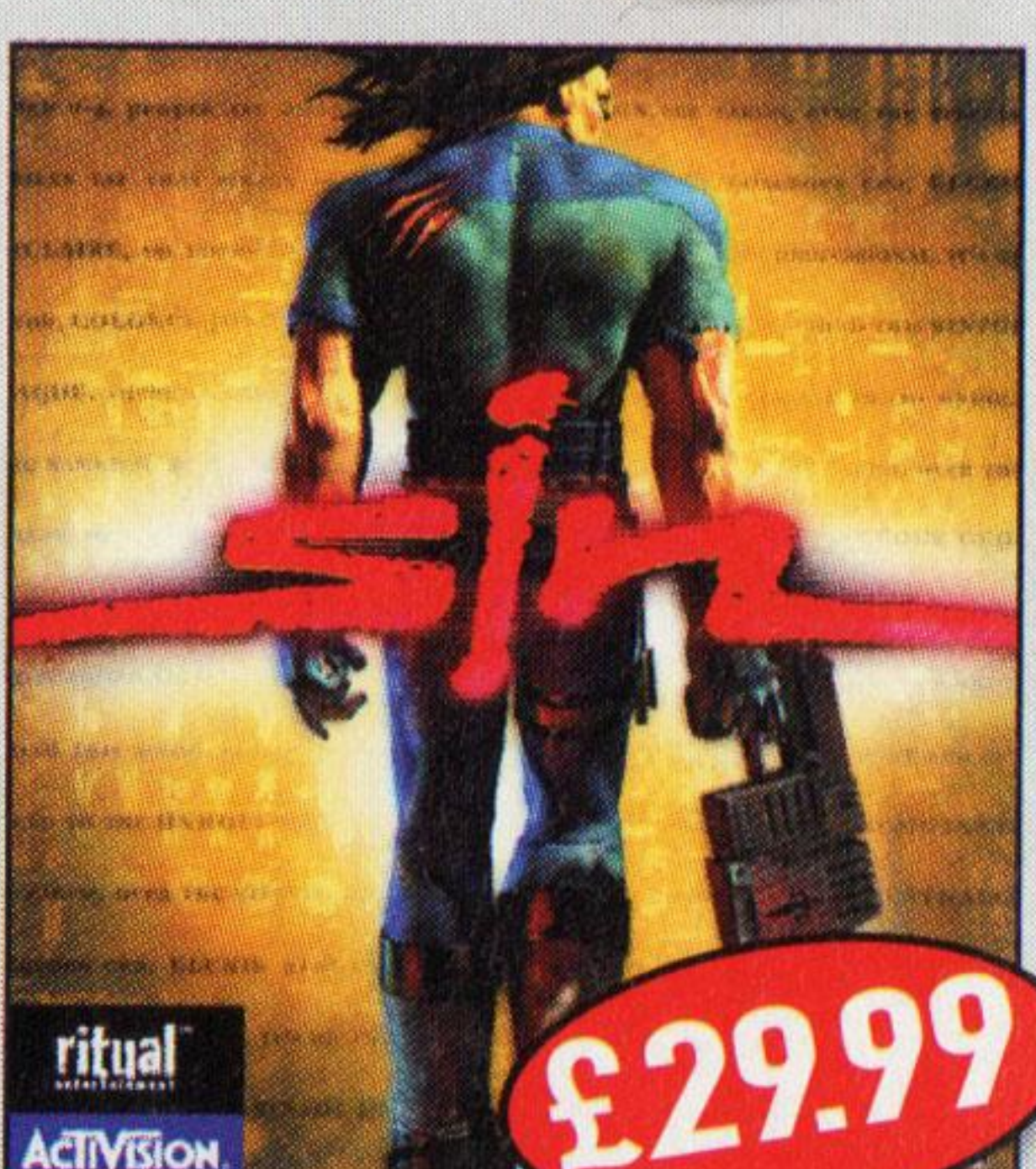
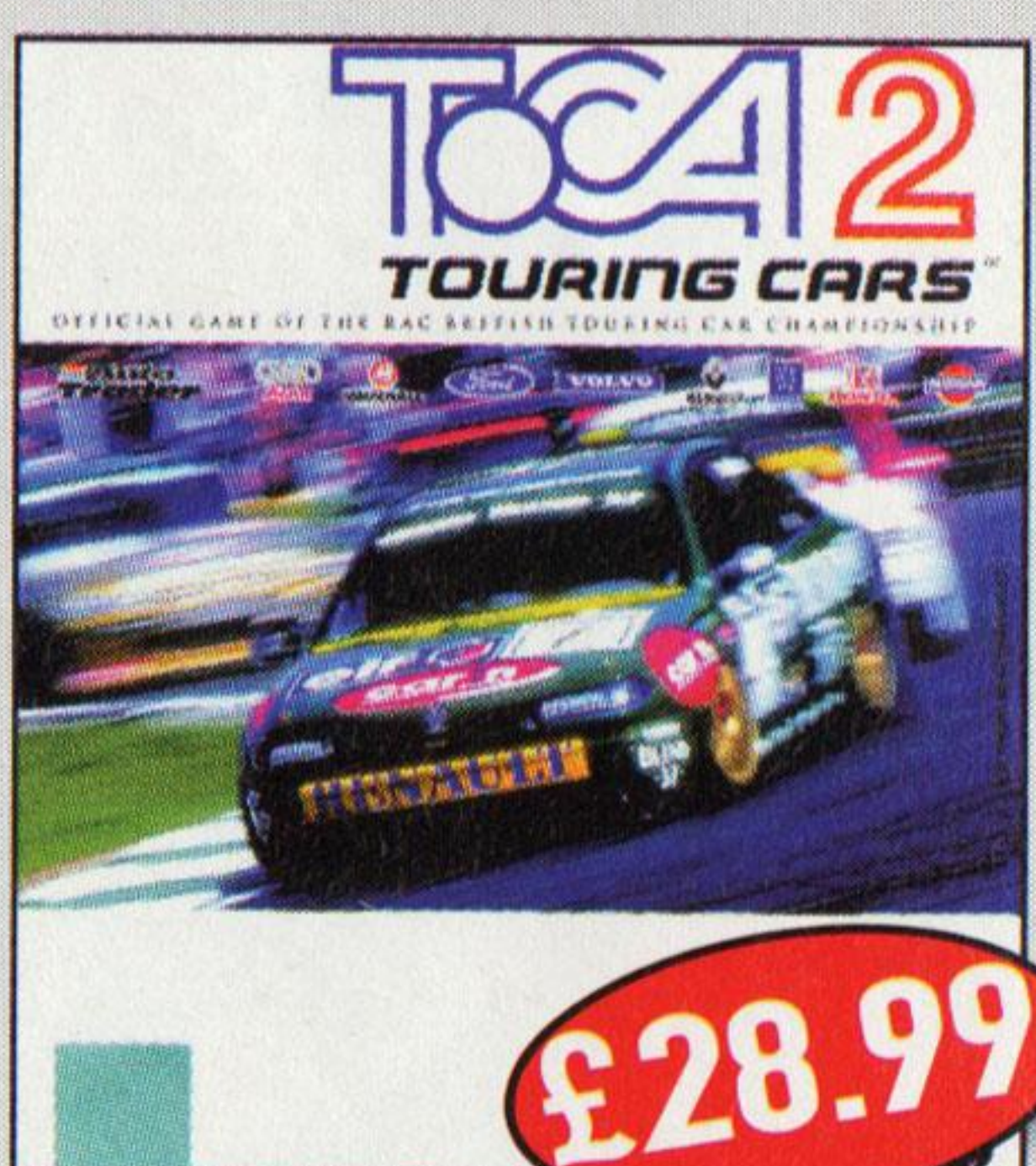
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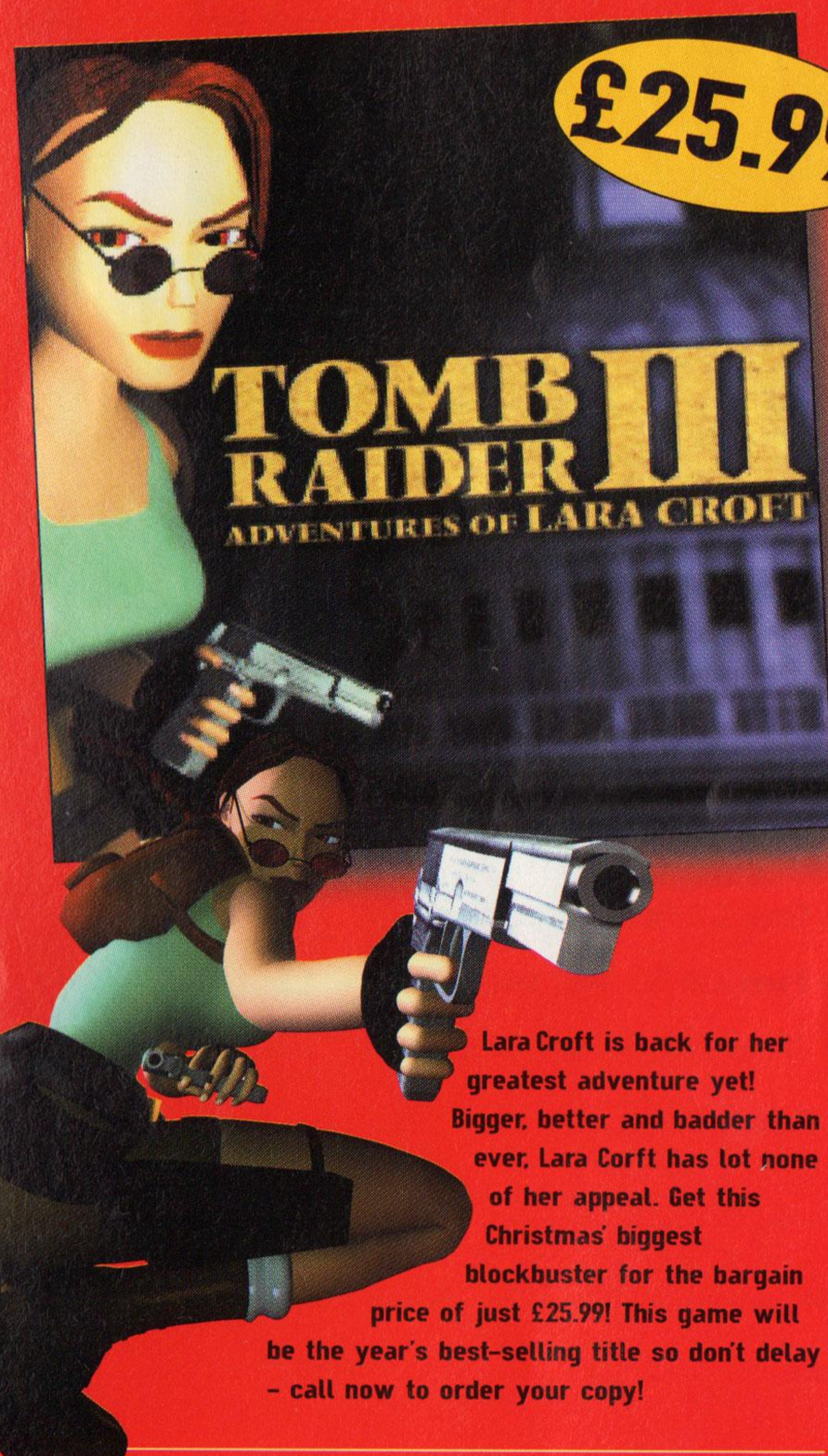


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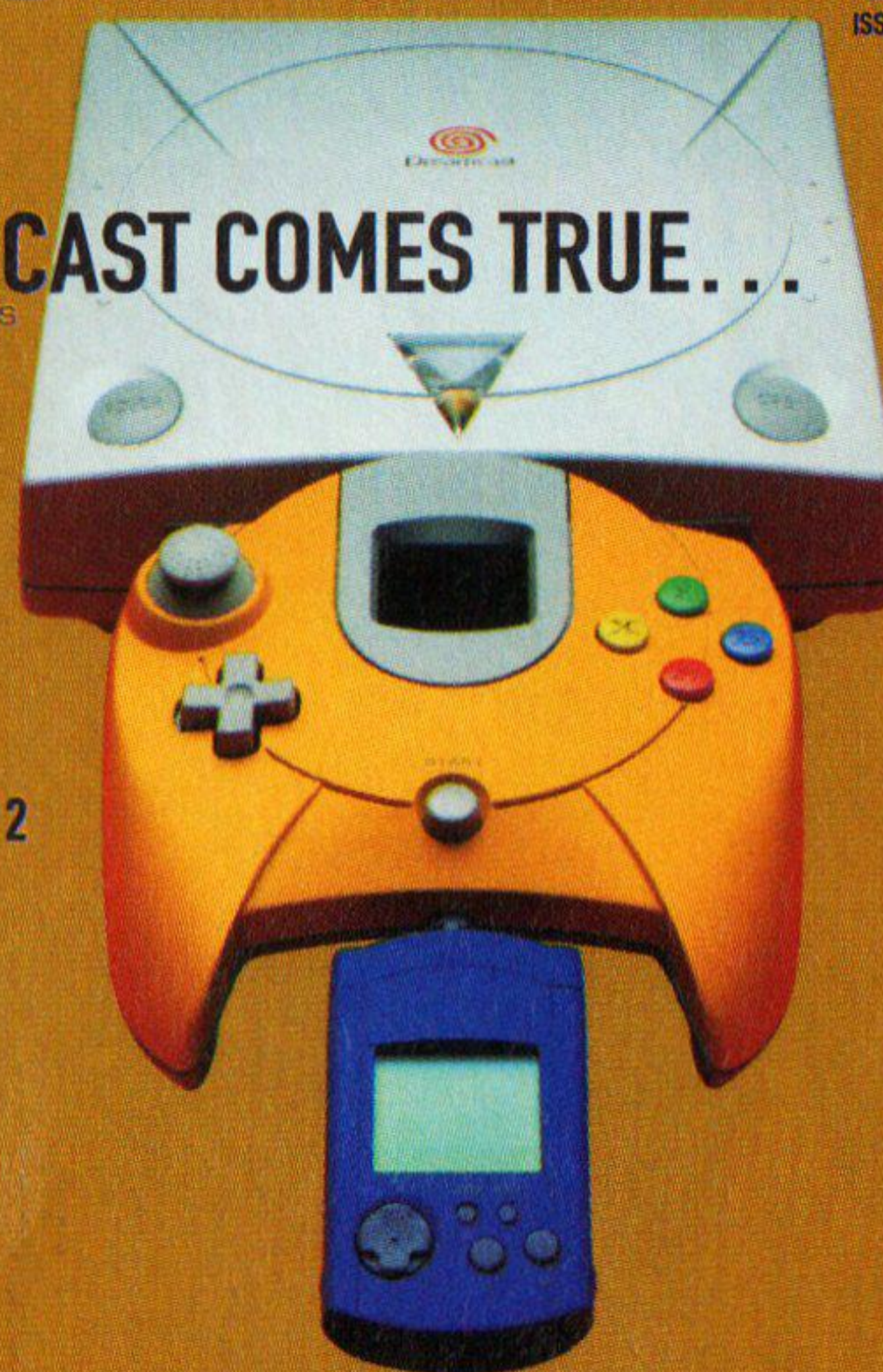
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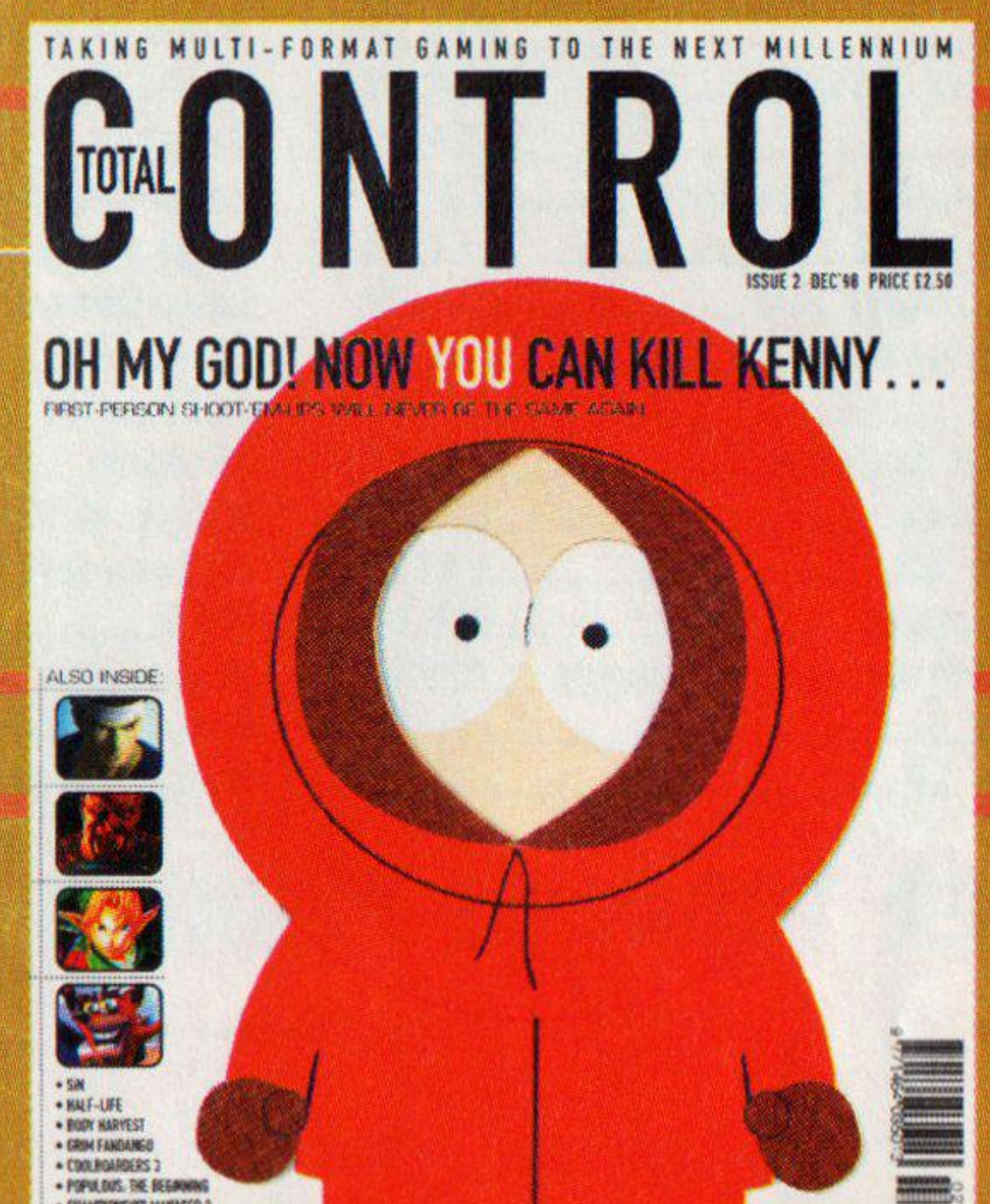
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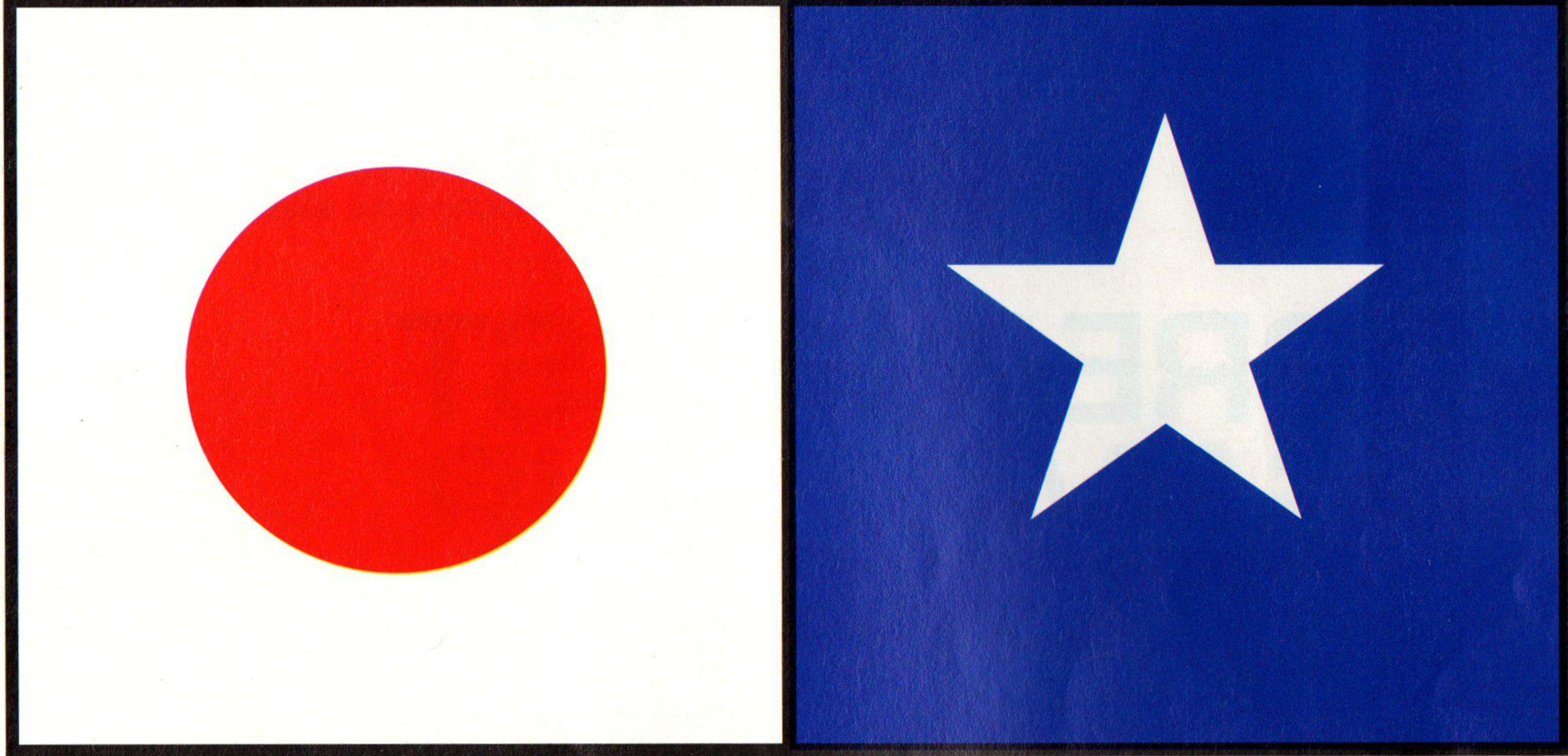
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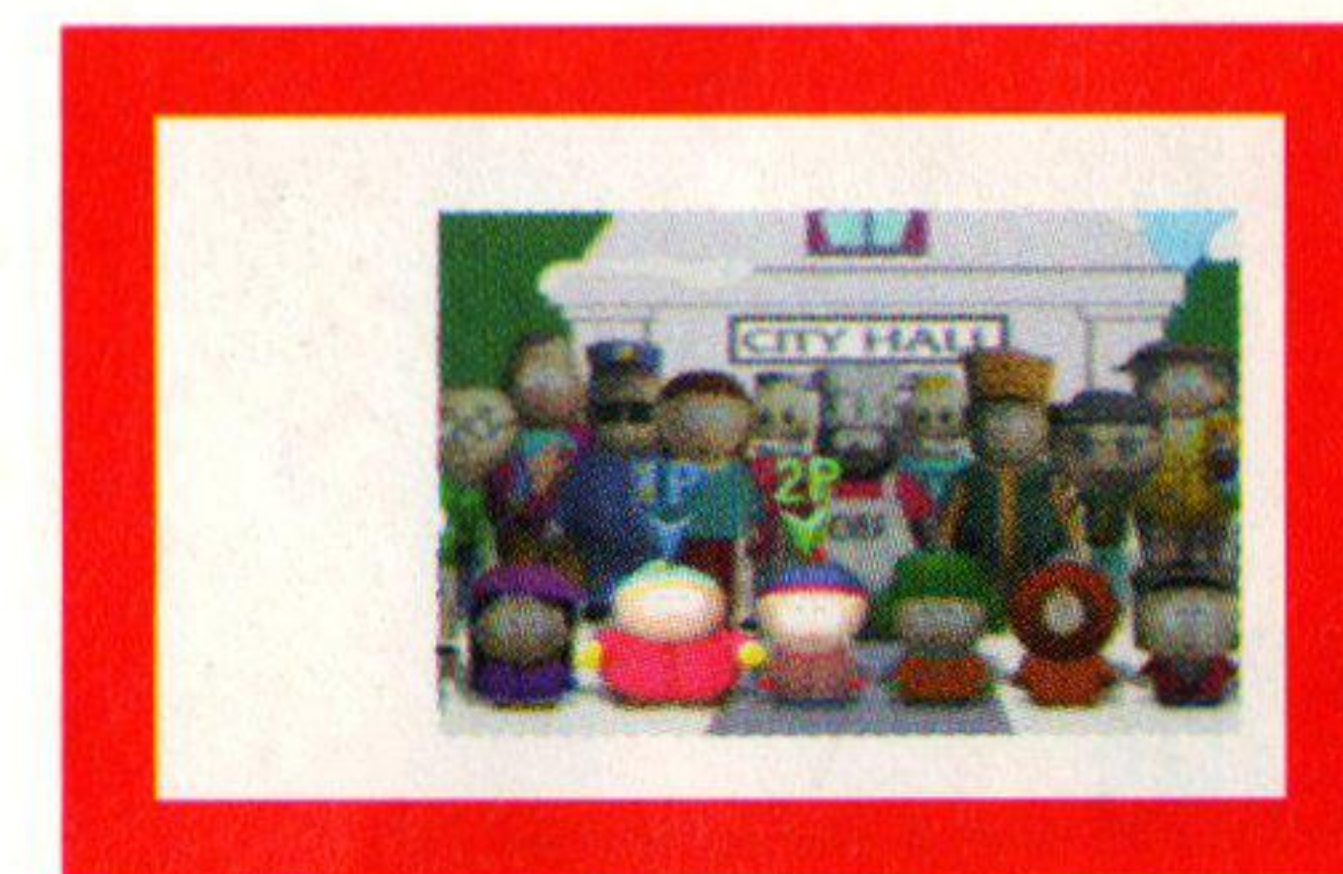
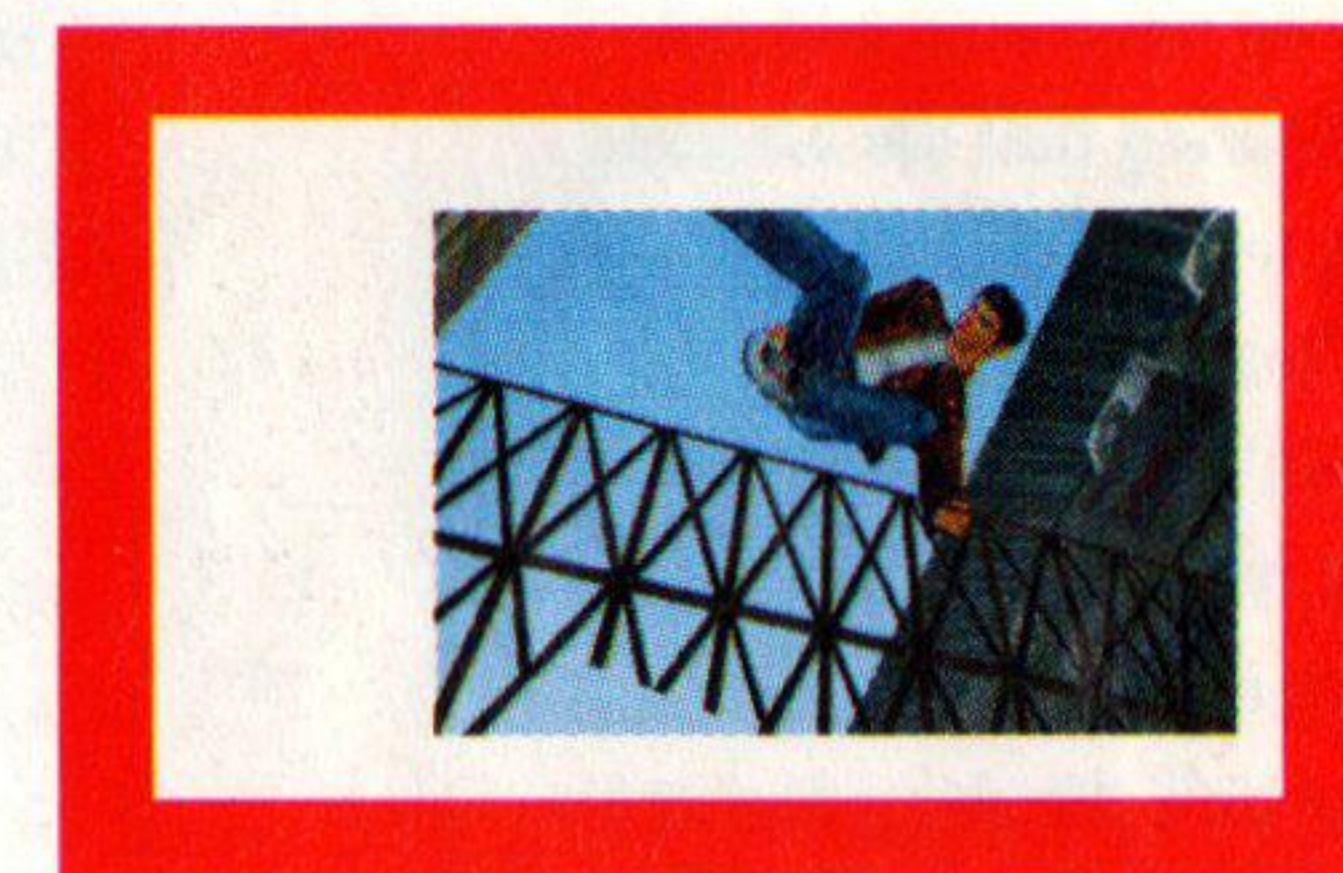
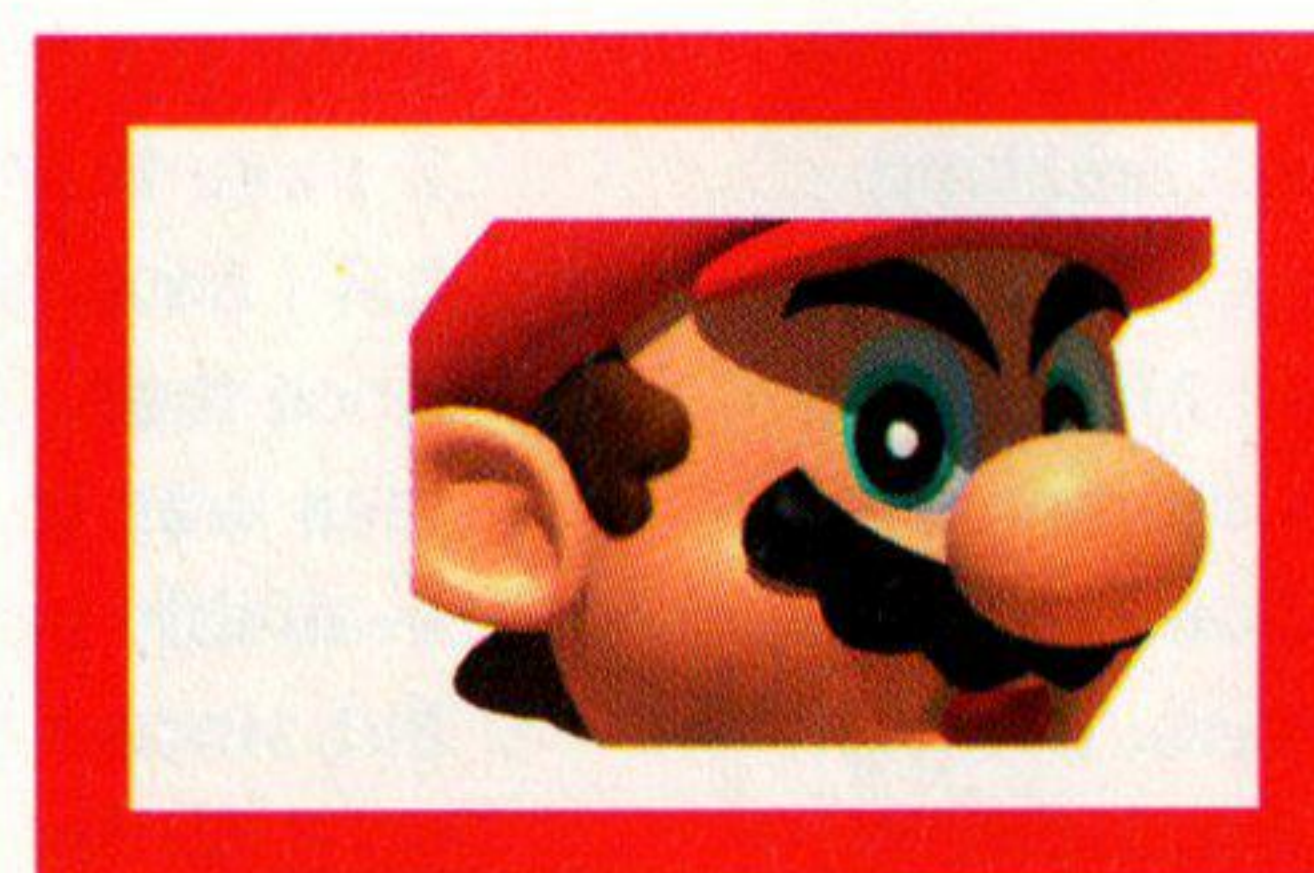
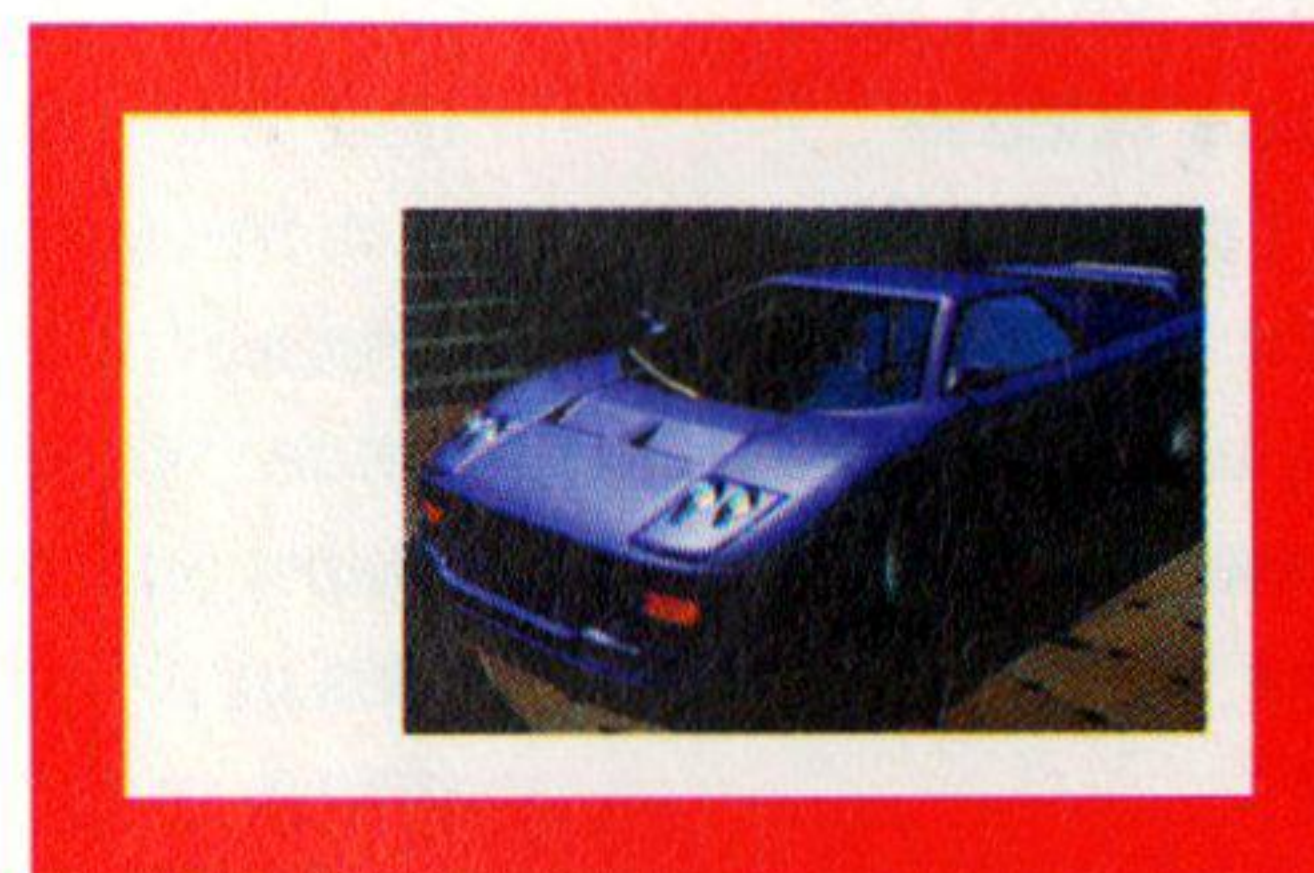
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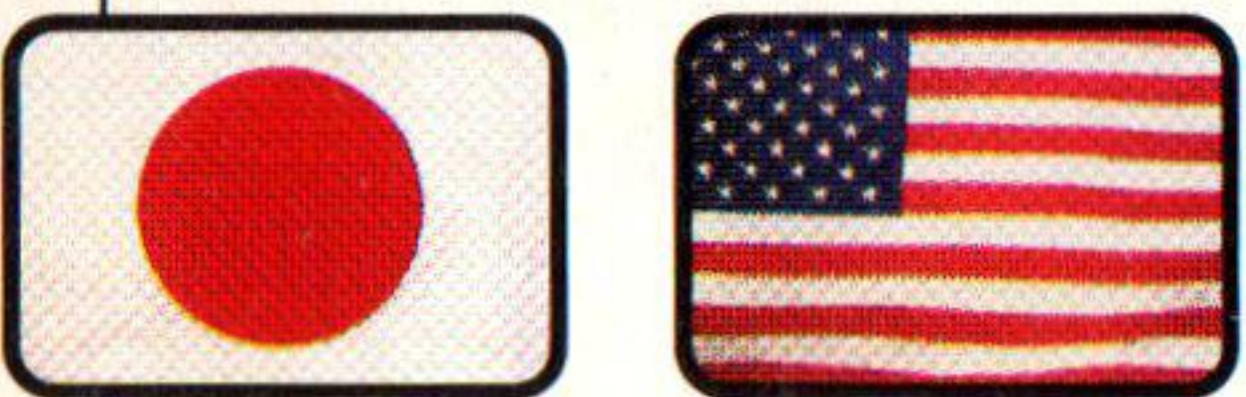
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FOREIGN OFFICE

This month's Foreign Office takes a look at an **evolutionary** new game, the rumours about **Mario 64 2** and some exciting **new shots of Shenmue...**

ZELDA TAKES JAPAN BY STORM

Reports from Japan indicate that *Zelda 64* has hit the number one spot in the charts, selling 386,234 units in the first two days after release. In comparison, Konami's *Metal Gear Solid* has sold a total of 316,000 copies since it was released in September.

Zelda 64 is on course to be the biggest selling game of all time in the US – NOA expect to have sold more than 2.5 million units by Christmas and are anticipating that the amazing sales will continue through the New Year.

We've yet to hear any news from the UK market, but we expect the impact of Nintendo's masterpiece to be just as significant.

DREAMCAST GAMES SLIP

Sega rue the delay of three key titles

Sega of Japan have announced that a number of key games will miss their original release dates. The games in question are *Climax Landers*, *Blue Stinger* and *Evolution*. *Climax Landers* and *Evolution* are both highly promising RPGs which are now looking at a release some time in February. *Blue Stinger*, Sega's answer to *Resident Evil*, will now not make the shelves before March '99 due to "several complications".

Climax Graphics, developers of both *Climax Landers* and *Blue Stinger*, offered an apology to gamers via the Gaming Age Web site. A spokesperson stated that "*Blue Stinger*, which was expected to be released on

January 14th '99, will be delayed due to several complications. We deeply apologise to all who are involved, as well as our fans. Currently, our entire staff is working 24 hours a day, including Saturdays and Sundays, but our progress has been unexpectedly delayed due to the amount of details and the numerous events still needed for preparation in the game. We also have over 250 maps, and that is another reason why we are having delays in our progress."

These delays can be seen as a serious setback for the Dreamcast in Japan, which looks like it might have a serious hole in its release schedule thanks to these delays.

Meanwhile, rumours

were rife on the Internet that *Sonic Adventure* had also suffered a setback and will only just have been released in January. These rumours have sprung up after reports leaked from Sega stated that they were no longer accepting pre-orders for the game. Not good news for Sega at all...



CLARIFY YOUR DREAMS

Sega have announced details of a VGA adapter for the Dreamcast that will allow you to use a PC monitor. This will potentially give games players a much higher-defined picture when compared to a TV. The 'VGA Box', as it is catchily known in Japan, went on sale on the 14th January, priced 7,000 Yen.

According to reports, the device will need special codes to work with certain games, and apparently some games will work (*VF3tb* and *Godzilla*) while others will not (*July* and *Pen Pen*). We'll have more details as soon as we get hold of the VGA Box.

SUPER MARIO 128?

Next Mario game unlikely to be on N64

After the completion of the ground-breaking *Zelda 64*, the game's creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, has turned his attention to the sequel to *Mario 64*. It's not all good news, however, as Miyamoto has revealed that the game is unlikely to appear on the N64. On the subject, Miyamoto has

been quoted as saying "We made the outline for *Mario 2* more than one year ago, but I haven't touched it since then. The original idea was to make it available on the 64DD, but since I haven't worked on it for the last year, I can't tell what it will be like." He also stated that, "Maybe we will get some

other people to work on it. Or we will make it for a completely different system."

With the game being set back because of the delays to *Zelda*, will it be too late to develop it for the N64? Expect to see the next instalment of this classic series on Nintendo's next console.



NEW NAOMI GAMES UNVEILED

Details of first Naomi titles announced

Sega's new Naomi Arcade board has yet to be let loose on the public, but that time is not too far away, and details are beginning to slip on some of the first games that will use the new hardware.

Dynamite Baseball may play very similar to the other baseball games, but graphically it's a good example of the power of the board with players looking impressively similar to their real life counterparts. All of the stadiums in the game have been authentically recreated right down to the advertising boards.

Zombie Zone is a hopeful *Code: Veronica* killer, which also looks incredible. The game features some extremely detailed texture mapping

and a lot of time has been spent on creating the right atmosphere, though independent sources hint that the gameplay may not match the graphic side at this point. Fortunately the release date has not yet been set, so there is a possibility that this will be ironed out by then.

The House of the Dead 2 is the perhaps the closest to completion. The story has many different branches in the game, and the route that you will lead your character through will depend on how many innocent people you've killed accidentally. *The House of the Dead 2* is set to be released imminently.

Details of two further racing titles have also recently been released.

Daytona USA 2 Power Edition will simply be an upgraded version of *Daytona USA 2*, albeit with a new car (the Hornet Classic, which featured in the original *Daytona*) and a new course. Despite not having any actual in-game footage of the other racer, *Crazy Taxi*, the cinema footage hints towards a taxi-based game involving car chases through the mean streets of San Francisco.

The graphic capability of the Naomi board is unquestionable at the moment. In many of the games you'll even notice the facial expressions of all the characters. With direct compatibility to the Dreamcast board, you can safely expect conversions of all of these games. Though how soon they will arrive is not yet known.

BEAT MANIA FOR DREAMCAST

Konami have announced that their hugely successful *Beat Mania* series is on its way to the Dreamcast. The game, currently doing great business in Japanese arcades and on the PlayStation, is a music-based game where players take on the role of a DJ and are awarded points for good mixing. It is also likely that Konami will release a special peripheral for the Dreamcast, as with the PlayStation version, with two circular pads controlling the turntables. The game, entitled *Pop 'N Music*, will be released in February in Japan.

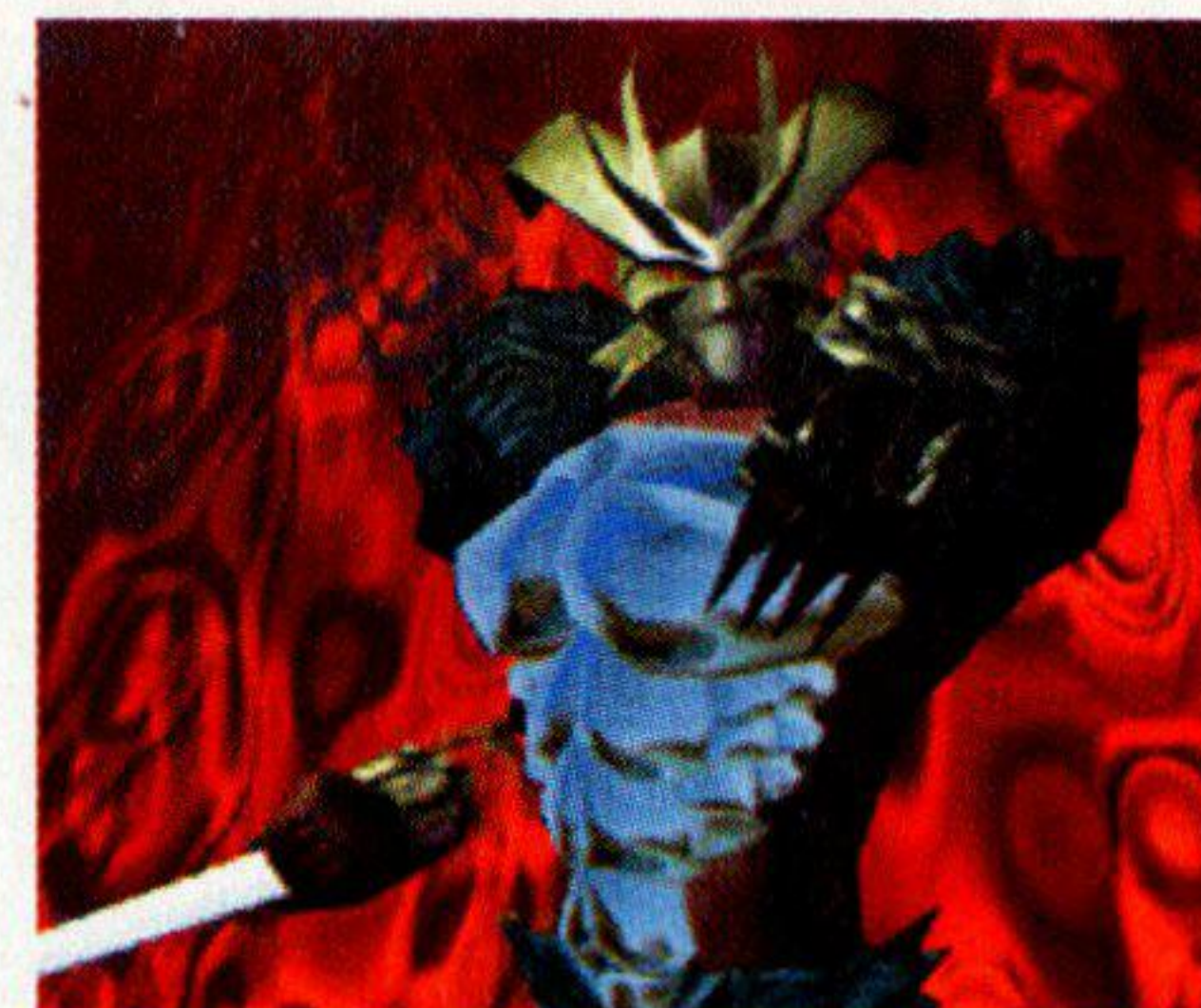
A BIG CROSS TO BEAR

Train to win with NEC's twist on Pokémon for Dreamcast

Seventh Cross, from NEC, is nearing completion and will soon be available for the Dreamcast in Japan. The game looks set to be a slightly more adult version of Nintendo's *Pokémon* game where you must raise

and train your creatures with up to 810,000 possible evolutionary outcomes. It seems to be shaping up really well, as these recently released screenshots show, with far more detail and an improved combat system.

The game will feature full VMS compatibility, though details on how the device will be used are still sketchy. An official release outside of Japan is unlikely, though the game will surely be very popular on the import market.



US DREAMCAST DATE?

Although there has been no official announcement from Sega, it seems likely that the American release date for the Dreamcast will be September 9th, 1999. All that Sega have announced so far is that the machine will be out this autumn, but rumours from inside SOA suggest this will be the date. This puts the US release not too far ahead of the expected UK release. Roll on 9/9/99.

A PRE-MILLENNIUM BUG ON DREAMCAST

Buggy Heat to rise on Sega's machine during '99

The arcade racer *Buggy Heat*, by CRI, is due to be released on the Dreamcast before April '99. The machine is already building on a large racing genre, and CRI's latest looks set to rank fairly highly amongst the rest. The 3D graphics are looking extremely detailed

with accurate suspension for the vehicles helping to provide one of the most advanced and detailed game engines for the sport. The large 3D landscapes are looking very polished with plenty of opportunities for powerslides and spectacular jumps. The game has a large variety

of courses, from deserts to snow-covered mountains and indoor arenas. Sadly there seems to be a lack of a four player racing mode – a two player VS will have to suffice – but all the other options, including championship modes etc., are there in full. Players will even have the option of customising

the appearance of their own cars in the garage. *Buggy Heat* will be published by Sega.



MIDWAY'S DREAM

US software giants Midway, have announced that they will be developing games for the Dreamcast. They have announced three so far: a conversion of arcade boat racer *Hydro Thunder*; a new *Mortal Kombat* game; and a conversion of the popular *NFL Blitz*. The games will be making their way to the Dreamcast between spring and autumn of 1999.



TIME OF THE MONTH?

Dreamcast launch game *July* hits the big screen

The adventure game *July*, by developers FortyFive, will be receiving a conversion to celluloid some time next year. The game relied very strongly on its story element, with detailed character interaction the main tool for plot development, so it is an understandable choice for a film conversion. Capcom's Naomi and Dreamcast title *Power Stone*, a highly detailed fighting game, will also be making a jump across the media barrier to Japanese TV. Set to become a daily Japanese cartoon series, the first episodes will be airing just before the game's release this spring.

KONAMI DREAMCAST DUO

Announcement of new future developments for Sega machine

Konami have announced that they will be adding two new titles to the ever-growing Dreamcast release schedule. *Flight Shooting* is a detailed simulation featuring several of the world's most popular aircraft, including the B-2 Stealth, F/A-18 Hornet, Mig-21 and several others. The limitations of the Dreamcast pad may mean that this piece of software will be optimised for the keyboard add-on accessory when it is released. The second title, *Pop 'N Music*, looks similar to the well-known *Beat Mania* game and is set to be a direct port from the Konami arcade, where players had to press various buttons in time to the music. *Flight Shooting* is set for release in Japan before the spring, while *Pop 'N Music* should hit the shelves over there during February.

UPDATE: SHENMUE

These screenshots arrived too late to go into this month's main *Shenmue* news piece (see Reportage), so we've included them here. Amazingly, what you are looking at is not pre-rendered footage from Sega's forthcoming epic RPG – these screenshots are all in-game. As if you needed telling, the detail and resolution is nothing short of miraculous. If nothing else, this game is shaping up to be the best looking console title ever.

To give you a recap of *Shenmue*, it is based on the RPG genre, only

Sega are attempting to implement some radical ideas into both the game world and the gameplay. The entire world is affected by the passage of time, an idea seen in *Zelda 64*, but here it is much more ambitious. Players will also be able to gain the ability to alter both time and weather conditions. How this will affect gameplay is unclear at present, but it is likely to play a large part in the game.

As far as gameplay goes, the game is story takes place in China, Hong Kong and Japan. Players will

also have to earn a living in order to feed themselves. This can be done by either getting a part-time job or by gambling at the local dice house.

The development team is being headed by Yu Suzuki, of *Virtua Fighter* fame, and *Shenmue* is shaping up to be one of the most intriguing titles ever released. Could this herald in a new dawn of real-time based games? Only time will tell, of course, and we'll keep you informed as soon as we have more information. *Shenmue* is due for release in Japan in the spring.



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いよいよさわれる、ドリームキャスト! 10月10-11日、まくはりへ!



Backed up by an advertising campaign that could **only work in Japan**, the **Dreamcast** was launched on November 27th, 1998. **Rachel Ryan** reports on possibly one of the **most important** events in Sega's history...

A Dream Come



There were only four games available at launch, but plenty of well-known developers are signing up for the Dreamcast, so the future's bright. The future's Dreamcast orange

Dreamcast True

Since the Dreamcast launch on 27th November, 1998, it seems every dedicated import gamer has been involved in a mad (and often futile) rush to get their hands on one. Dreamcasts have been decidedly scarce in the West, and the situation in Japan has not been much better. Despite optimistic reports on the launch date of units being readily available in Japan's major cities, Sega's initial batch of 150 000 units sold out within days, with the bulk of sales having been taken up by pre-orders – common practice in Japan, where waste is considered a terrible thing, companies underproduce, and the customer is often left empty-handed. However, the

situation is somewhat worse with the Dreamcast, as Sega initially based their proposed production run on 1994 pre-order figures for the Saturn, and official sales figures for both Saturn and PlayStation. The Dreamcast has since outperformed both these machines in terms of units sold at launch. It's still too early to evaluate whether Sega are onto a winner here, though the situation is certainly looking favourable for the Dreamcast. Despite the shortage of units, consumers in Japan seem very satisfied by the status of the console, thinking little of queuing up overnight in order to make their purchase. Things are now getting better as Sega have produced more Dreamcast units for the second and



Whatever else is said about the launch titles, they are certainly varied



Almost every Dreamcast sold from the first batch also represented the sale of a copy of the stunning *Virtua Fighter 3tb*

third batches sold in Japan. However, it is still difficult for those living in small towns to get hold of the console. Many stores have limited the amount of Dreamcasts sold to two per customer – some stores have even dropped this figure to a single unit after reports that some customers were buying Dreamcasts for other people and charging the recipient for the queuing-up time. Naturally this has made life very difficult for importers travelling from the West in order to procure units. However, despite all these problems, there seem to be few complaints about the launch, though this may have a lot to do with differing attitudes in Japan; while the import gamer is left fuming at their lack of Dreamcast, the average Japanese gamer was well-prepared for the lack of availability. Unfortunately the initial launch titles (with the exception of *Virtua Fighter 3*) were poorly received in the Japanese press, with *Pen Pen Trilcelon* and *July* attaining merely average scores in magazines. The lack of any real disregard for Sega based on this rather poor selection can again be attributed to the different attitude of the Japanese gamer. In the West we tend to judge consoles based on the initial titles available (or, sadly, not our own perceptions of those titles but the amount of hype they receive). Maybe because the Japanese are forced to pre-order titles in many cases, they build up more of a respect for games that are as yet not on the shelves. Japanese consoles are usually packaged without games, meaning the gamer makes their own choice of title to buy with the unit. In fact, most Dreamcasts sold represented a purchase of *Virtua Fighter 3*, with just under 140 000 copies of the game sold at launch. The other three launch titles did comparatively poorly, with *July* attaining a miserable 14 000 units sold; *Godzilla* and *Pen Pen Trilcelon* didn't fare much better, reaching 22 000 and 17 000 sales respectively. It seems that gamers in Japan who are unappreciative of fighting games bought their Dreamcast and waited for *Sonic Adventure* and other anticipated titles to be released.

THERE SEEM TO BE FEW COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE LAUNCH, THOUGH THIS MAY HAVE A LOT TO DO WITH DIFFERING ATTITUDES IN JAPAN

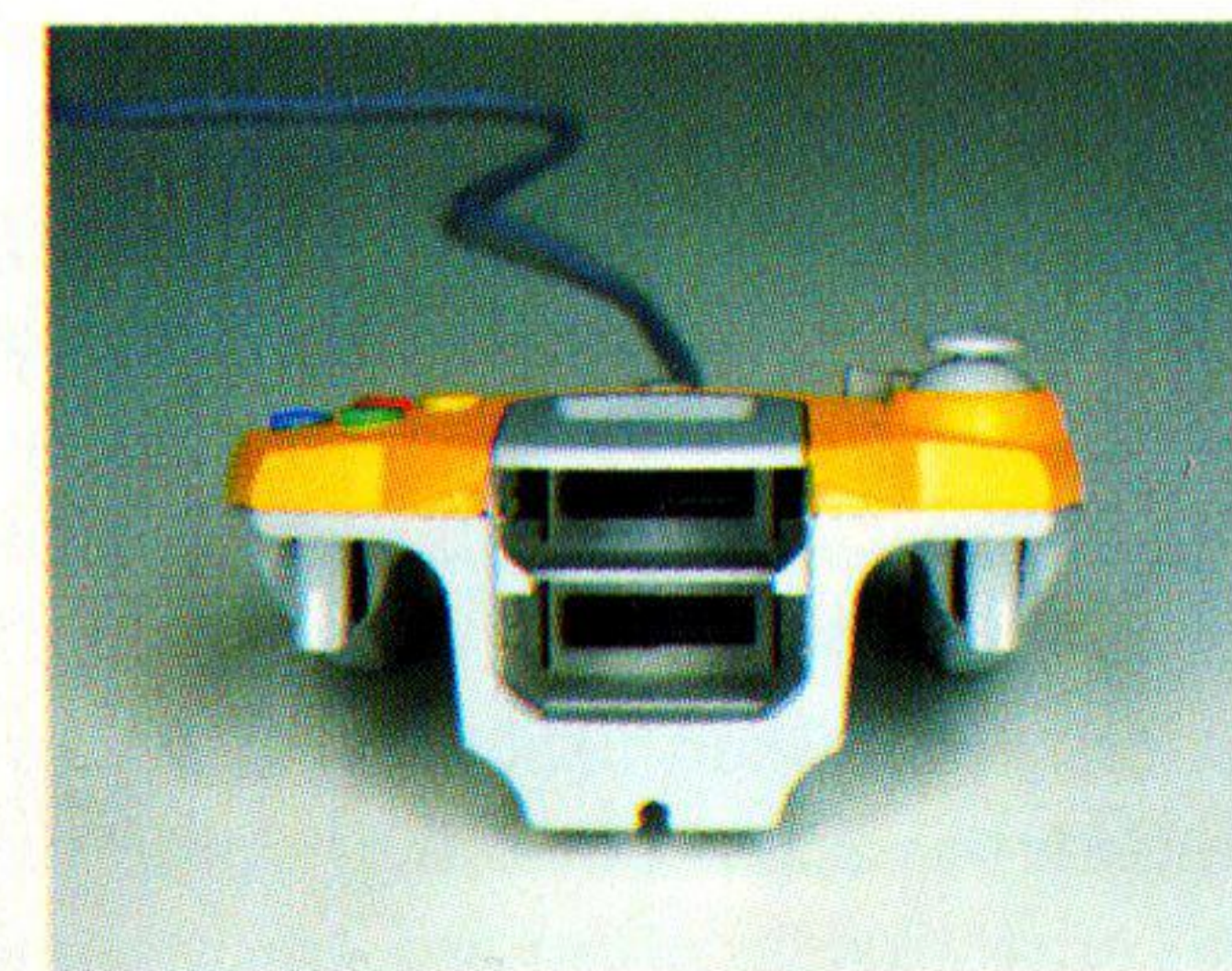
Moment of anticipation

Based on the release schedules, there's a lot to anticipate in terms of quality software. Sega's in-house support for their latest venture is, as always, admirable, with a huge amount of titles planned in the coming year. Sega have always been the principal developers for every console they've released. This has little to do with the fact that Sega consoles have in the past been comparatively ill-received, and a lot to do with just how prolific Sega as developers actually are. What is surprising, however, is the support for Dreamcast from third parties. Obviously there are the old Sega faithfuls like Climax, Warp, Game Arts and Red signed up for the console, but a

considerably high amount of new companies are launching on the strength of Dreamcast alone. Developers who have previously had little to do with Sega are also joining the list of teams producing software for the machine. Ironically this may be down to the initial success in Japan of the Saturn; while the Master System and Megadrive could actually be considered failed endeavours in the East, the Saturn stood up well against the PlayStation, outselling Sony's machine until the announcement of *Final Fantasy VII*. Sega may have lost money on the Saturn, but third party developers rode out those four years releasing Saturn titles and were considerably profitable as a result. Sega have finally proved their potential for mainstream success in Japan – mainstream in the sense that before, Sega appealed to a niche market. Fortunately for Sega, that niche market is still present (a fact proven by the wealth of arcade and simulation games in the Dreamcast schedule) along with the newer, broader appeal that Sega now have. This could be another catalyst to their success.

Sega's audience

While the Saturn and its cohorts were 'just consoles', Sega describe the Dreamcast as 'a thing for everyone' (with 'thing' perhaps being the operative word). The emphasis is certainly on variety. The Dreamcast includes a modem for accessing the Web (with the opportunity to access on-line games, demos, educational titles and multiplayer interaction with some titles). The console also boasts a variety of add-ons, from the Visual Memory units to an actual keyboard – though, of course, in the case of Web access, a keyboard is important. Add-ons for





July – not a game for those who aren't fluent in Japanese

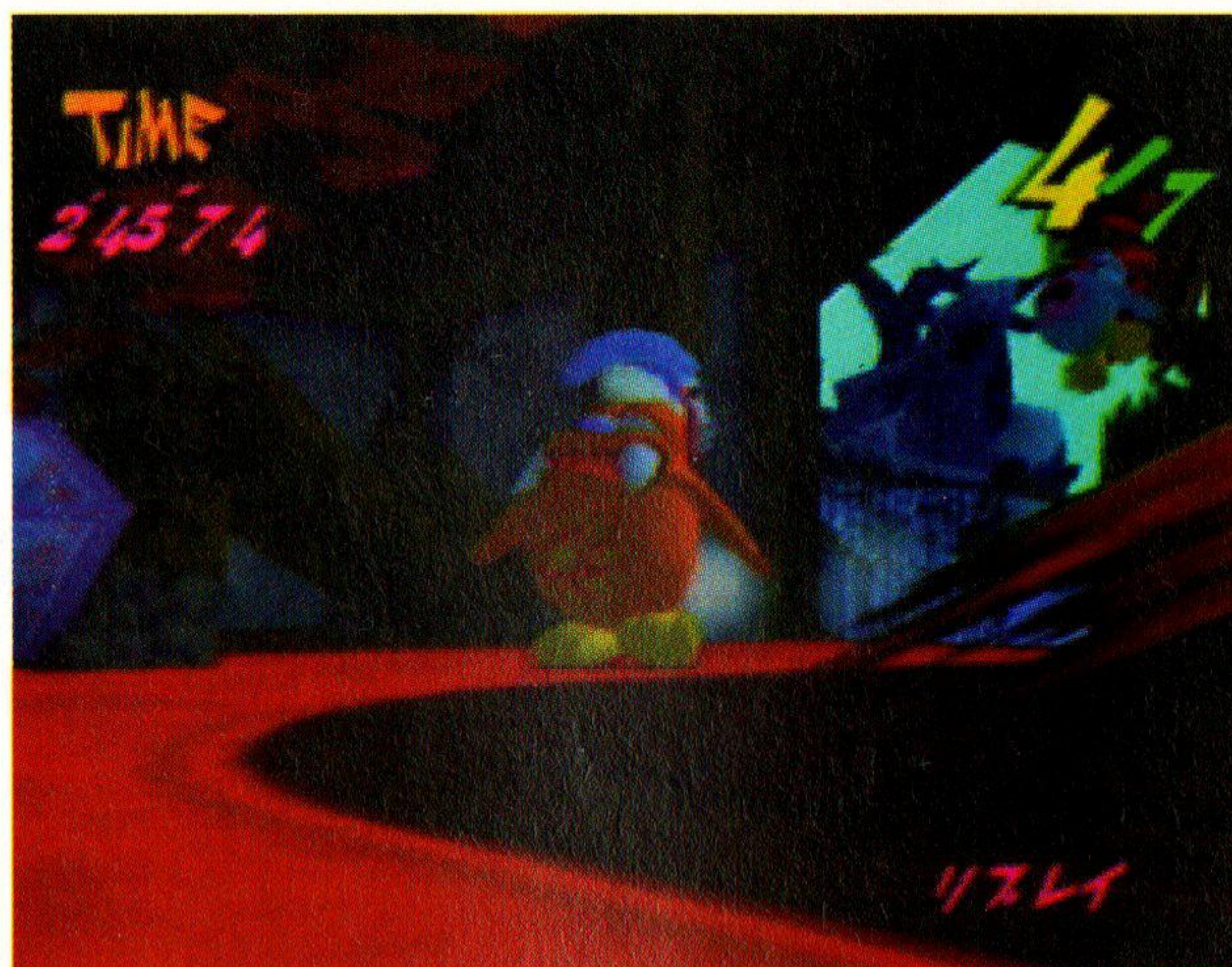
the actual games have not been forgotten however; an analogue steering wheel is being released alongside Sega Rally, and Sega's 'Buru-Buru Pak' (their answer to the Rumble Pak) will be compatible with most titles. Sega's approach is somewhat different to Sony's marketing of the PlayStation, which was touted as an essential device for playing games; much like a Walkman was advertised as being essential for listening to music outside of the house. Sega are not saying their Dreamcast is essential by any means, instead allowing the consumer to make their own minds up about the console. This is an advertising strategy that has been proven to work in the past, as the consumer feels they are not being patronised by the company selling the product. Sega's advertising before the launch of the Dreamcast was of the subtle variety. While it may have screamed 'Dreamcast' at the reader, that's about all it did do, with many adverts merely featuring the logo and some text, or in some cases no text at all. The Dreamcast spoke for itself – or rather, the adverts were aimed at an audience who already knew the product. Sega also used humour to push the console, with company president Shoichiro Irimajiri (known somewhat affectionately in Japan as merely 'Irimajiri san') featured on many adverts accompanied by text that essentially said "Make this old man happy – buy a Dreamcast". Sega's other approach with the Dreamcast is to appeal directly to Japan's regard for novelty items. The size of the unit is the most notable thing – its 'vital statistics' are a tiny 190mm x 195mm x 78mm. The colour and dimensions

SEGA HAVE FINALLY PROVED THEIR POTENTIAL FOR MAINSTREAM SUCCESS IN JAPAN – MAINSTREAM IN THE SENSE THAT BEFORE, SEGA APPEALED TO A NICHE MARKET

are comparable to NEC's PC Engine, a Japanese console released over a decade ago, which proved to be the most popular (it could be argued, only popular) upgradable console of all time. It's doubtful that this was pure accident as the Dreamcast appears to be appealing to a similar audience. Add-ons like the VMS and the Buru-Buru Pak may be purely gimmicks, but gimmicks certainly do sell, and the collectability of such peripherals will always appeal to the Japanese, and indeed Western audiences.



A monster of a game in more ways than one. Fun for a while, but definitely aimed at the hard-core Japanese Godzilla fan



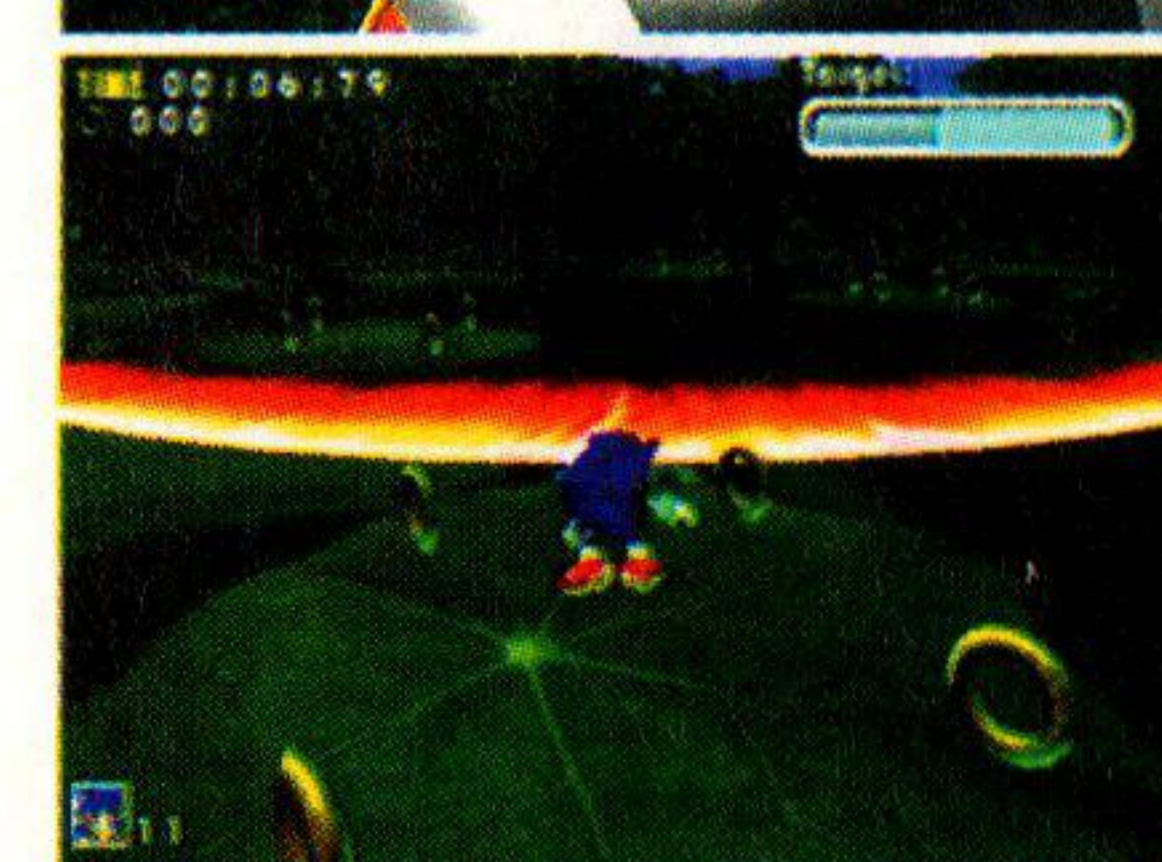
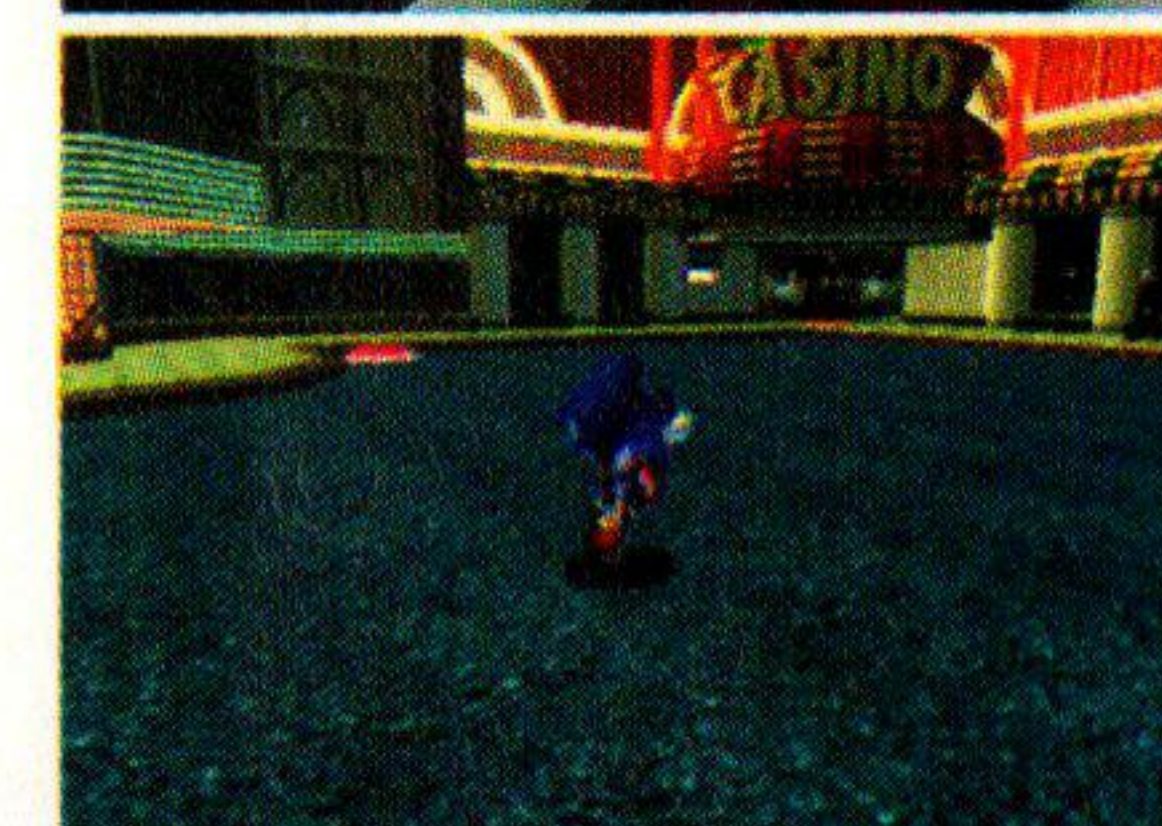
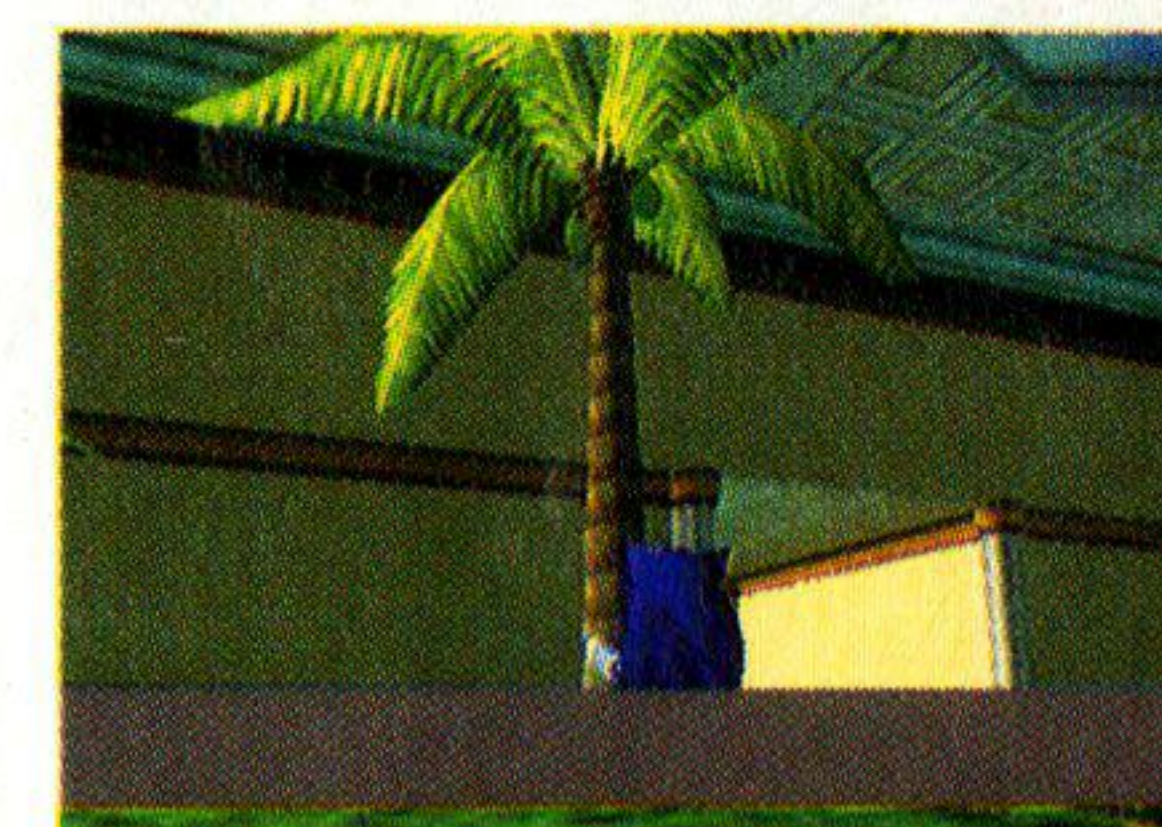
The most original of the launch titles, *Pen Pen Tricelon* came in second, shifting 22 000 units at launch

Importing in the UK

Initial Dreamcast units sold in the UK and America reached ludicrous sums of money thanks to Hong Kong importers seeing the demand and reacting accordingly. However, prices are beginning to drop to what can be considered a reasonable level. Obviously, though, if you want to buy a Dreamcast, you will need a compatible television. Most import consoles to date have been packaged in the UK with SCART cables, which allow the console to be used on most TVs with the SCART (pure RGB) signal. Unfortunately Sega have stated that the Japanese Dreamcast does not output RGB as standard, meaning that people wishing to import will need either a TV capable of true NTSC or an unofficial conversion box for SCART TVs (some Dreamcasts are being sold with these – check with your supplier). In other words, just because your TV is compatible with your import PlayStation, it doesn't mean the Dreamcast will work with it. However, some importers will be offering RGB conversions to the

Dreamcast, which seems the best solution as it results in the best available picture.

Sega themselves state on their Webpage that anybody in Japan wanting an RGB display will have to make a bit of a compromise by waiting for their 'VGA Box', which will display the Dreamcast picture on a PC monitor. However, this being a conversion box, it offers no increase in quality on account of merely taking the existing video signal and converting it. It seems at present that those wanting true RGB quality in the UK (and Japan, ironically) will have to get their console converted. **TC**



Sonic Adventure – the launch title that should have been



Ridge Racer Type 4

If there was **one game that convinced legions** of games buying punters to shell out on the unknown quantity that was the **PlayStation**, it was **Ridge Racer**. Can the fourth instalment bring down the **checkered flag** on the **rising sun** that is the **Dreamcast**?



When Sony first entered the video games arena, there were doubting Thomases out there who sought to discredit the global corporation by pointing out their complete lack of experience in the industry. What the detractors didn't anticipate was the business savvy with which Sony have built their electronic consumer goods empire.

Armed with the knowledge that Nintendo's straightjacket policies for

dealing with third party developers had brokered much antagonism between Namco and Nintendo, Sony approached the arcade giants with a view to an exclusive contract. And they got it.

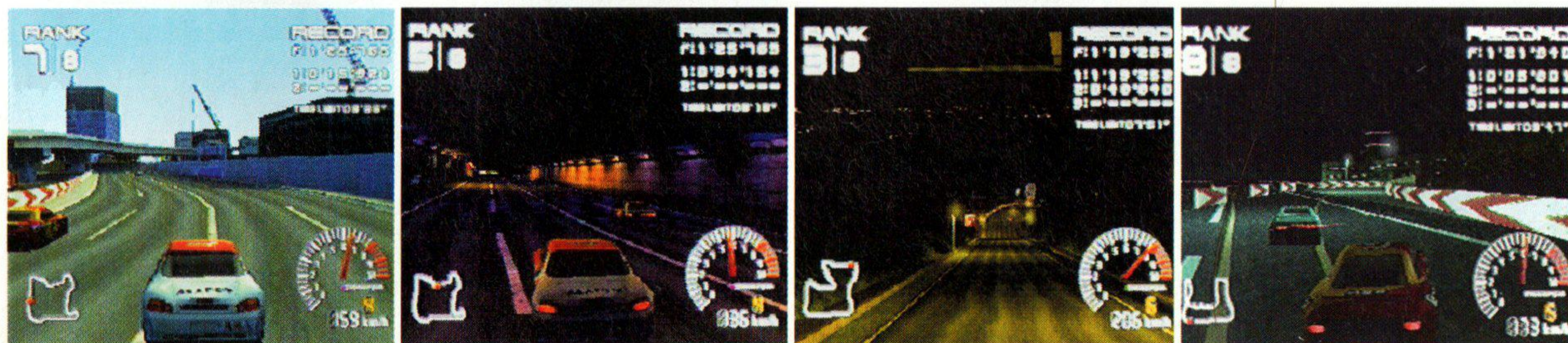
Namco gave Sony one of the finest racers ever in the form of the first *Ridge Racer*, which was practically arcade perfect. Having only recently progressed from the 16-bit SNES, the colourful, fast and very 3D *Ridge Racer* impressed games players everywhere.

The class of '98

Taking into consideration the unrivalled year it's been for PlayStation driving games, it would take either a brave or foolish man to put out yet another one, and far be it from me to call Namco foolish. We were all wowed by *Gran Turismo*'s lavish graphics and realistic car physics. *Colin McRae Rally* wooed us all with its attention to detail, followed by the sucker punch of *TOCA 2*'s gritty realism.

INFORMATION

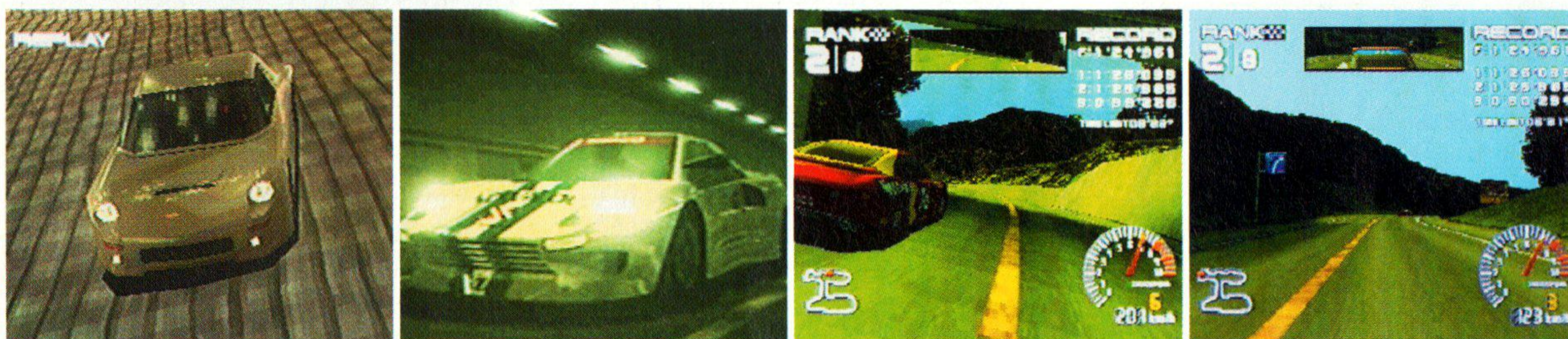
FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Sony
DEVELOPER	Namco
STYLE	Racing Game
RELEASE	Out Now
PLAYGROUND PRICE	£49.99
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	Yes
DUAL SHOCK	No
MEMORY CARD	One Block



Some of the backgrounds are truly stunning, and *RR Type 4* includes some of the best night driving effects seen in any game

RIDGE THE FIRST

A second shiny disk in the package contains a turbo-cool hi-res update of the original *Ridge Racer*, including the loading screen version of *Galaga*. Although the graphics look impressive with their new sheen, that handling now looks severely dated alongside its 1998 successor.



With a replay to rival *Gran Turismo* and an intro worth weeping over, that razor straight yellow line is only the start

Having just conquered the beat-'em-up world once more with the ground-shaking *Tekken 3*, Namco obviously felt confident that they could repeat this success with their equally long-serving racing franchise.

NAMCO GAVE SONY ONE OF THE FINEST RACERS EVER IN THE FORM OF THE FIRST RIDGE RACER, WHICH WAS PRACTICALLY ARCADE PERFECT

The first thing that strikes you about *R4* (to give it its snappy industry-friendly acronym) is the superlative smoothness of the graphics engine. The backgrounds on some of the later levels are nothing short of jaw dropping, replete with vapour trails from passing jet liners far overhead and wheeling gulls taking in the racing action below.

A large portion of *Gran Turismo*'s success was down to the ground-breaking visuals, only possible thanks to the infamous performance analyser, which lifted the graphical capabilities of the PlayStation to the next generation.

It's a contentious point of view, but the visuals of *R4* out-perform even those of the mighty *Gran Turismo*. There's next to no polygon clipping or pop up, even in heavily built up urban tracks in the heart of New York.

Can you tell what it is yet?

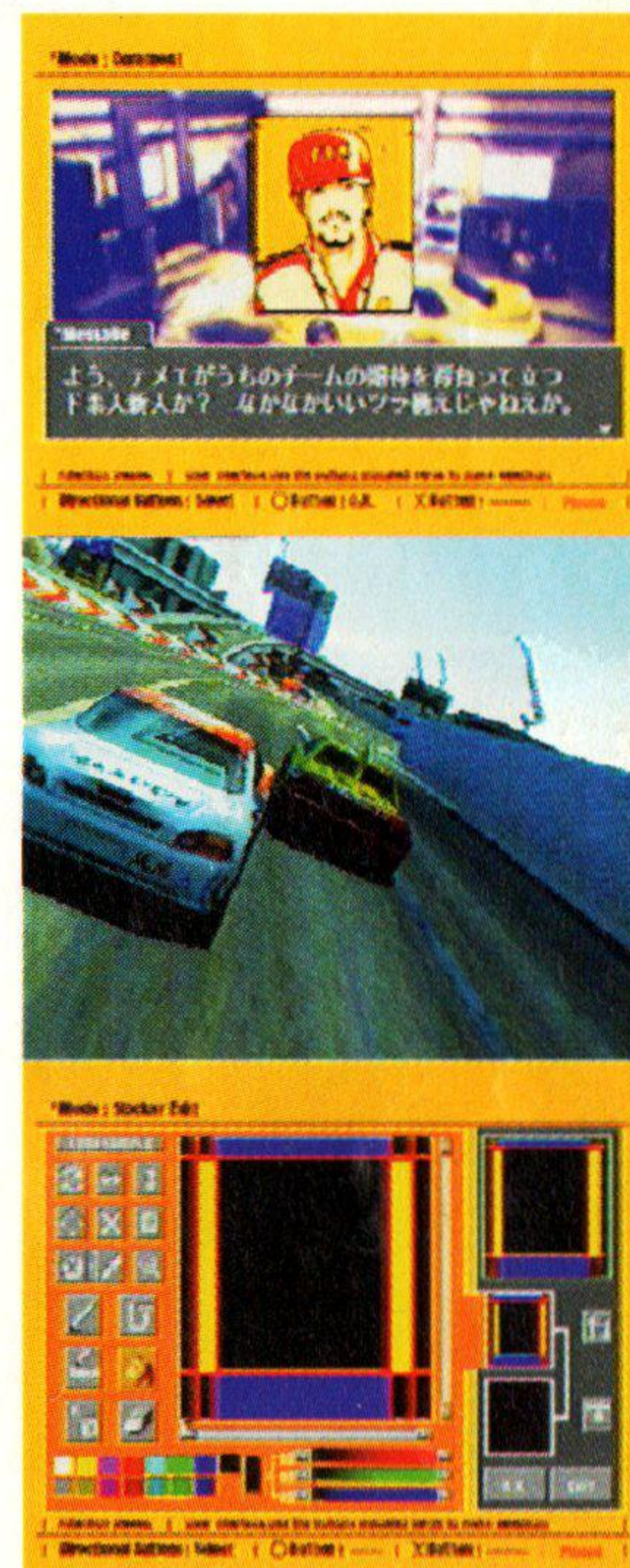
The update is very impressive, as all the trackside detail draws near, rather

than draws in. Particularly impressive are the tracks' arboreal arrangements, with individual leaves distinguishable as you pass – so much more professional than Ocean's *Max Power Racing*, where entire tree trunks disappear from view into thin air!

Extensive use of the high-res mode means that the far distant background detail is superb, avoiding the blocky postcard panoramas of *Colin McRae Rally*. All of the lighting is processed in real-time, with the quality of daylight shifting as the race progresses and sunset draws nearer. Even sexier than this are the reflection effects that play across the cars' bonnets and boots, especially during the night-time levels, where you can see the headlights of the car chasing you.

TAKING CONTROL

Very few intro movies can stop the temptation to get right on with the gameplay in its tracks, but *R4* boasts one of the slickest and most cinematic front ends ever. The graphics are incredible – almost photo-realistic, which is a trend that continues into the game itself. This is a title that demonstrates just how able the now aged PlayStation is to compete with its younger console rivals.



The Grand Prix mode is incomprehensible to those non-fluent in Japanese. The stickers are less trying



Despite the simplistic handling, the suspension shift is a nice touch, as the car leans through the bends and curls away following collisions



JOG, YOU'RE A CON?

In a remarkable feat of commercial coincidence (or should that be cash-in?), Namco are releasing a 'revolutionary' controller for use with *R4*. Titled the JogCon, it consists of a horizontal miniature steering wheel that even provides force feedback in direct relation to the behaviour of the car.



This feature shows itself off admirably in the brief (last lap only) replay mode. Also a benchmark *GT* beater, this playback mode uses dynamic camera angles to accentuate the Cannonball Run-style mayhem to be had.

All this is very well and good, but just how quick is the game? Very. Even with eight cars on screen at the same time, there is absolutely no sign of slowdown whatsoever.

Take me anywhere

Although the first circuit you encounter is a somewhat anonymous affair consisting of grey urban streets, it isn't too long before the rolling, swooping curves of a hack across open countryside has you scorching your way around the hills. More impressive are the details such as larger than life moored supertankers at the dockside and domed observatories on the hillside.

It wouldn't matter in the slightest if *R4* was the single most graphically impressive video game in



The quality of the daylight effects is often almost photo-realistic – believe it!

the history of the industry if it played like a complete dog. Some people would have you believe that this is the case, but they just don't appreciate the charms of a pure arcade racer.

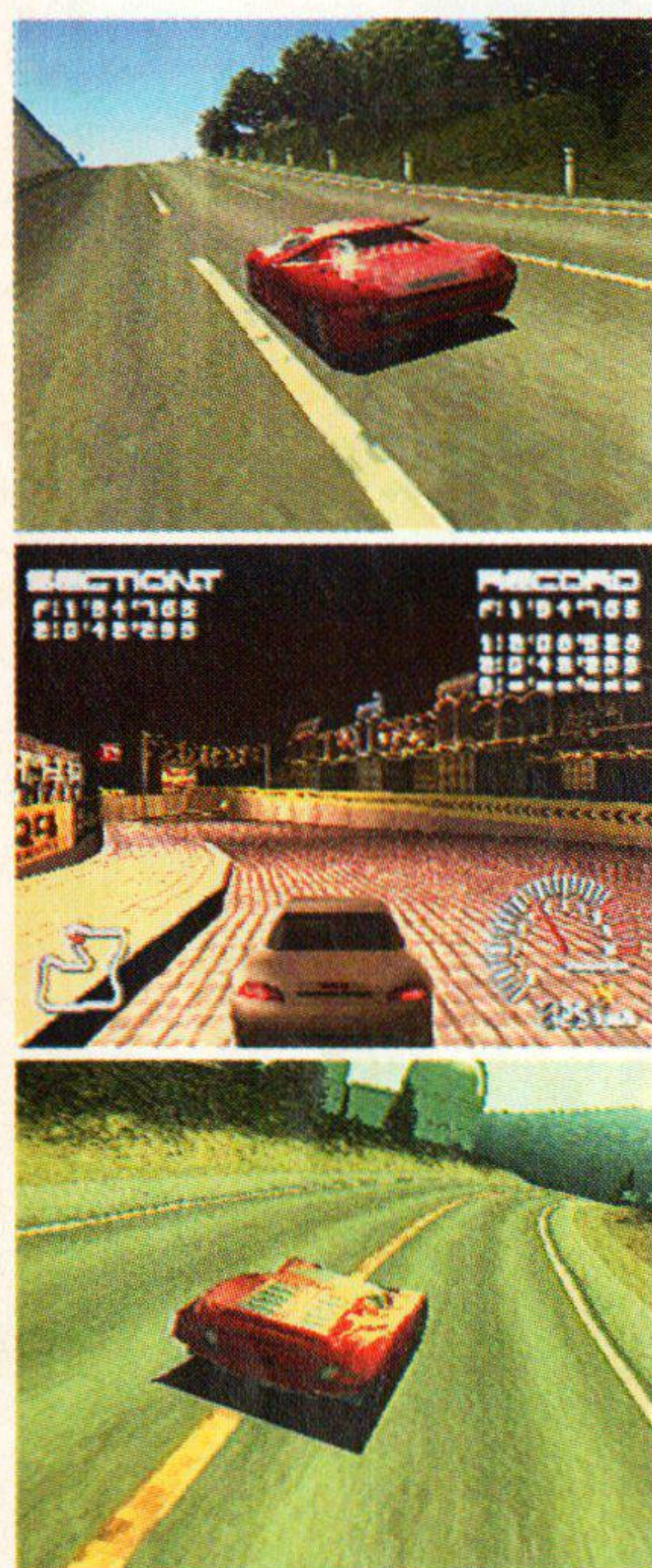
Not everyone wants a 'real driving simulator' – not everyone can cope with it. And those people that do want it may not want it all the time. *R4* is a winner because it doesn't try to outdo *GT*, it tries to outdo itself.

The *Ridge Racer* pedigree is so good that this fourth instalment

succeeds merely by taking its own heritage to the next level. For long-term *Ridge* enthusiasts, *R4* provides exactly the kind of arcade physics action that you'd expect. Although

THE BACKGROUNDS ON SOME OF THE LATER LEVELS ARE NOTHING SHORT OF JAW DROPPING

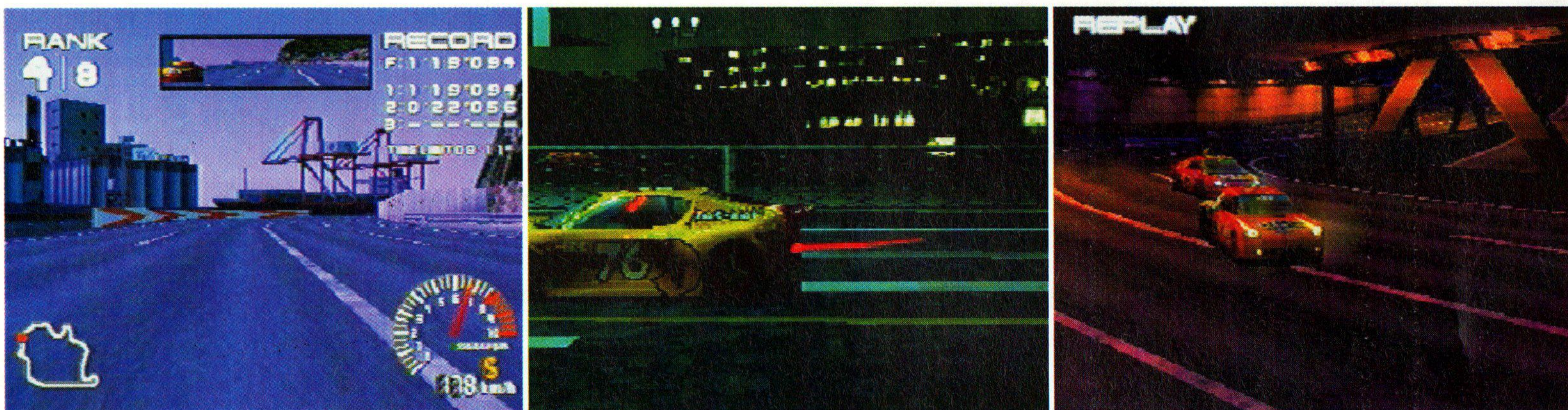
things have moved on since the first instalment, it's still very much a case of steering into a sharp bend, stabbing the brake before getting back on the gas to invoke exactly the powerslide which will pull you through the bend with nary a scratch on your immaculate paintwork.



No flat tracks here – it's all up and down hills with your foot flat on the floor



As with the earlier *Ridge Racer* titles, progress is made far easier by winning newer, faster cars to be delivered on your team lorry in a manner reminiscent of the ancient *Spy Hunter*



The brake light trails are a very Japanese manga touch – and very cool!

For gamers newer to the scene who have been weened on the likes of *GT* – or indeed those with a marked preference for realistic driving engines – *R4*'s handling will seem woefully simplistic and crass.

Enjoying this game as immensely as I did, I couldn't help but mock the 'on/off' manner in which the skids work. There's absolutely no sense of danger, as you're in no risk whatsoever of losing control. There's also no feeling of driving on the edge with the car about to slip out from under you. No, instead you get a skid whenever you request one, and it

unjust amounts of velocity and skidding actually gaining you speed. The most disappointing factor is that there's absolutely no account taken of damage to your vehicle during the race, and you certainly can't flip your car over.

Check it out, one time

Considering that *R4* is an arcade racer, it does seem to be a curious omission that there's no Single Race option. If it's racing action that you're after, there's no option but to plough through an entire Grand Prix season, which can be a bit tedious if you're



IT ISN'T TOO LONG BEFORE THE SWOOPING CURVES OF A HACK ACROSS OPEN COUNTRYSIDE HAS YOU SCORCHING YOUR WAY AROUND THE HILLS

doesn't end up with wild fishtailing either; the car simply grips the road again instantly, like a Scalextric car dropping into the slot.

While you can accept this as part of the *Ridge Racer* ethos, more frustrating are the infantile collisions, which amount to mere bumps between tons-worth of metal moving at 130 kph! Although the suspension shift, visible through the entire screen's movement, is a neat touch, it's pretty much exactly the same for every impact, which hardly enhances the realism factor.

As for the AI of the CPU cars, while they aren't particularly sophisticated, with no wrangling for position between themselves, they do try to block your overtaking moves. The whole cause and effect equation seems a little unbalanced throughout *R4*, with collisions often costing you

just after a quick fix. Although you can take on the Time Trial mode, it just isn't as exhilarating without all the other cars to ram into the barriers. The only other option is to take on the Extra Trial, which is basically a versus mode against a particularly notable opponent. This takes us right back to the angel car/devil car scenario of yesteryear, but it's hardly the same as being able to carve your way through the pack on any given track, is it?

The game's audio content is perfectly good, if not fantastic. The engine note can sound a little bumblebee-like at times, but the echo effect in tunnels is superb. As for the voice-over – "C'mon... take this loser... NOW!" – it's exactly the kind of cheesy commentary that you'd expect from a *Ridge* game, and you'd

miss it if it weren't there. Even the music is fittingly cheesy in a way that makes you smile, safe in the knowledge that you are playing a damn fine video game in the tradition of the seminal *Out Run*.

Ridge Racer Type 4 is very much a game of two halves – those of the look of the game and the play of the game. Nobody can deny that *R4* is one of – if not the – smoothest, slickest and quickest racing games available on the PlayStation. Hell – anywhere! But the driving engine is such that it will alienate anyone after anything more than an arcade racer in the very traditional sense of the phrase, no matter how glorious the graphics. **Steve**

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ●○○○○

Bearing in mind Namco's exclusivity contract to the Sony PlayStation, there's absolutely no chance.

N64 ○○○○○

Even less chance than the PC, don't even think about it.

Dreamcast ●○○○○

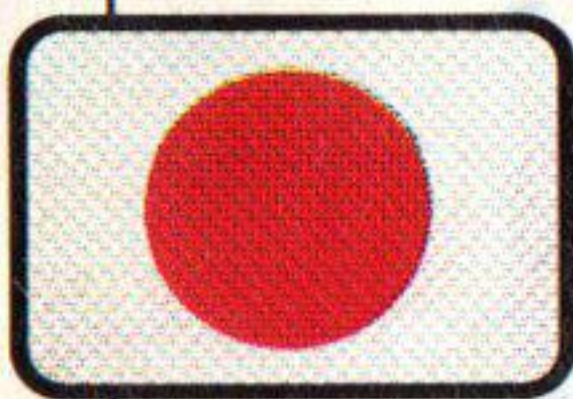
Namco have confirmed that they will be developing titles for the Dreamcast but it's extremely unlikely that any of the *Ridge Racer* series will be amongst them.

IMPORT
SOFTWARE
SUPPLIED BY:

PLAYGROUND
PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Ridge Racer Type 4
GRAPHICS	94
SOUND	70
PLAYABILITY	84
OVERALL	85
Out of 100	



SONIC ADVENTURE

Sega's mascot returns to **jump-start the Dreamcast** and **return the company to its Cyber-Razor-Cut glory days.** Being **a cute fuzzy mammal** was never this dangerous...



INFORMATION

FORMAT	Dreamcast
PUBLISHER	Sega
DEVELOPER	Sonic Team
STYLE	3D Platform
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	One
VMS	Yes
ON-LINE	No

TAKING CONTROL

Wow – what a step forward for Sega gaming! The graphics are stunning, the pace is frenetic, but then this is a Sonic game.

However, after what seemed like mere minutes of play I'd already experienced a wealth of different gameplay styles, from RPG exploration to an artificial life simulator incorporated within the levels. How much better can this game get?



fter what seems like a long wait – despite the fact that the console itself is merely weeks old – Sonic's first

Dreamcast installment is now available to the Asian market. Initially planned as a launch title, *Sonic Adventure* was delayed by a month for supposed 'bug fixing'. But more of that later... *Sonic Adventure* marks something of a departure for its Japanese developers Sonic Team, in that it's actually a Sonic game. Don't laugh – there hasn't been a true Sonic follow-up since the third game on the Megadrive. Wanting to experiment with different concepts in gameplay, Sonic Team licensed out the rights to the series to developers Travellers Tales. This UK-based company went on to produce the isometric game

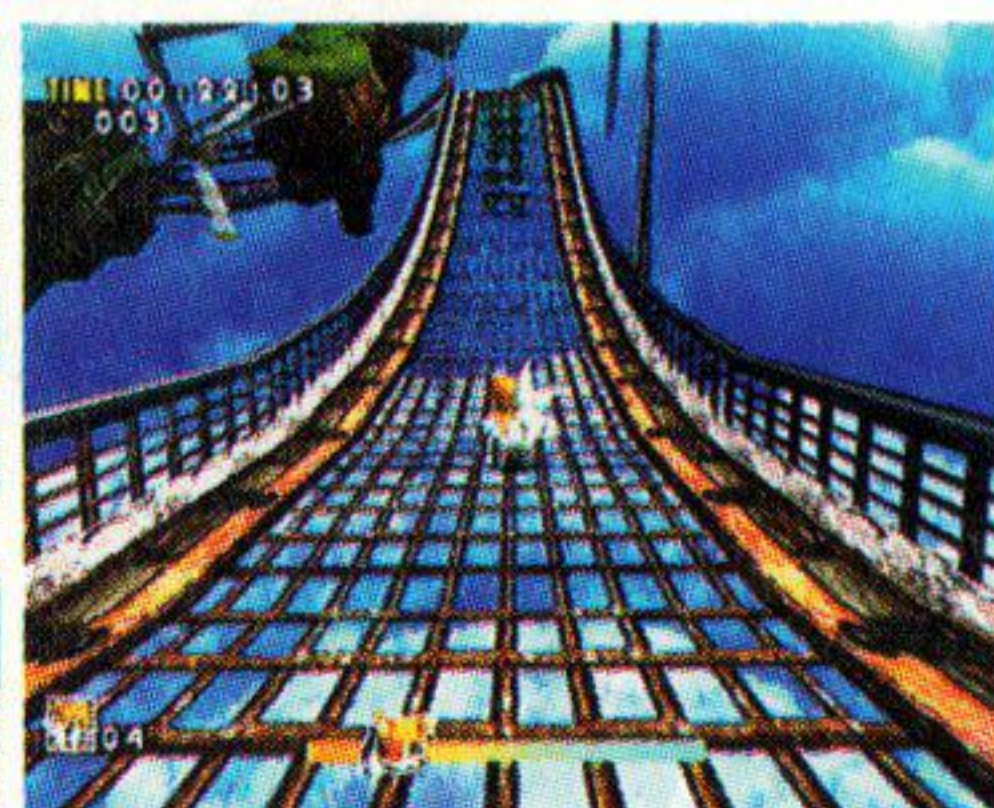
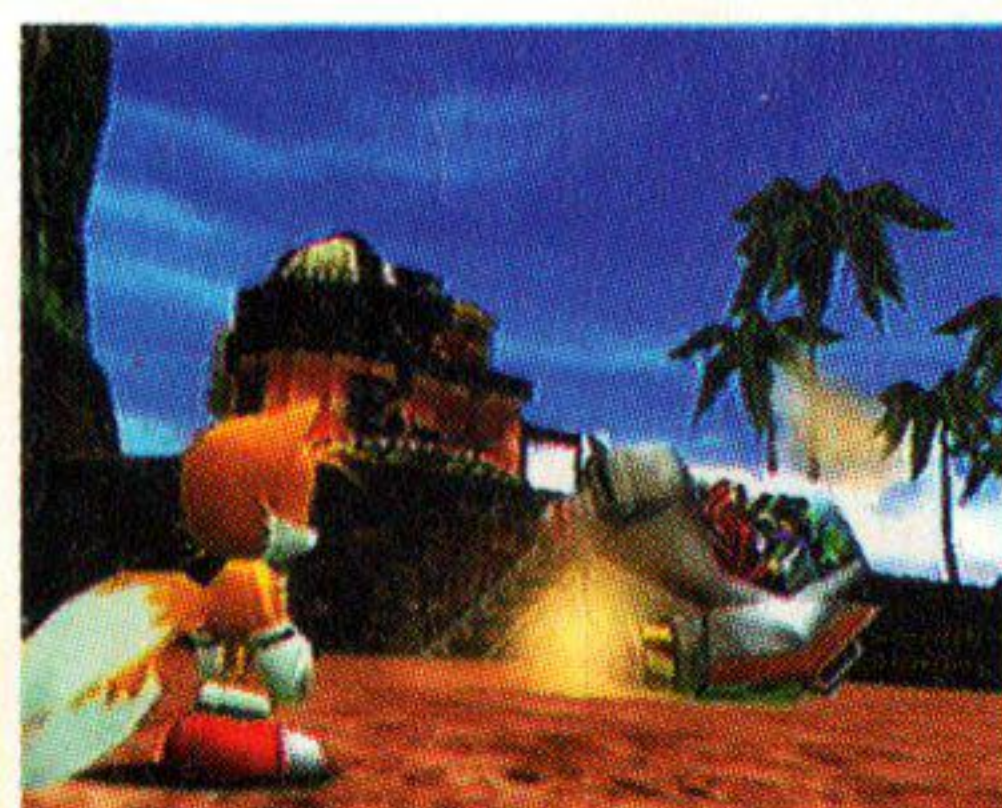


Sonic 3D for the Megadrive – later updated for the Saturn – and *Mario Kart* clone *Sonic R* for Saturn. Both these games were competent in their own way but failed to recreate the general feel of the originals. After trying different approaches in marketing for the Saturn, Sega of Japan have taken up their abandoned mascot once again.

A new spin

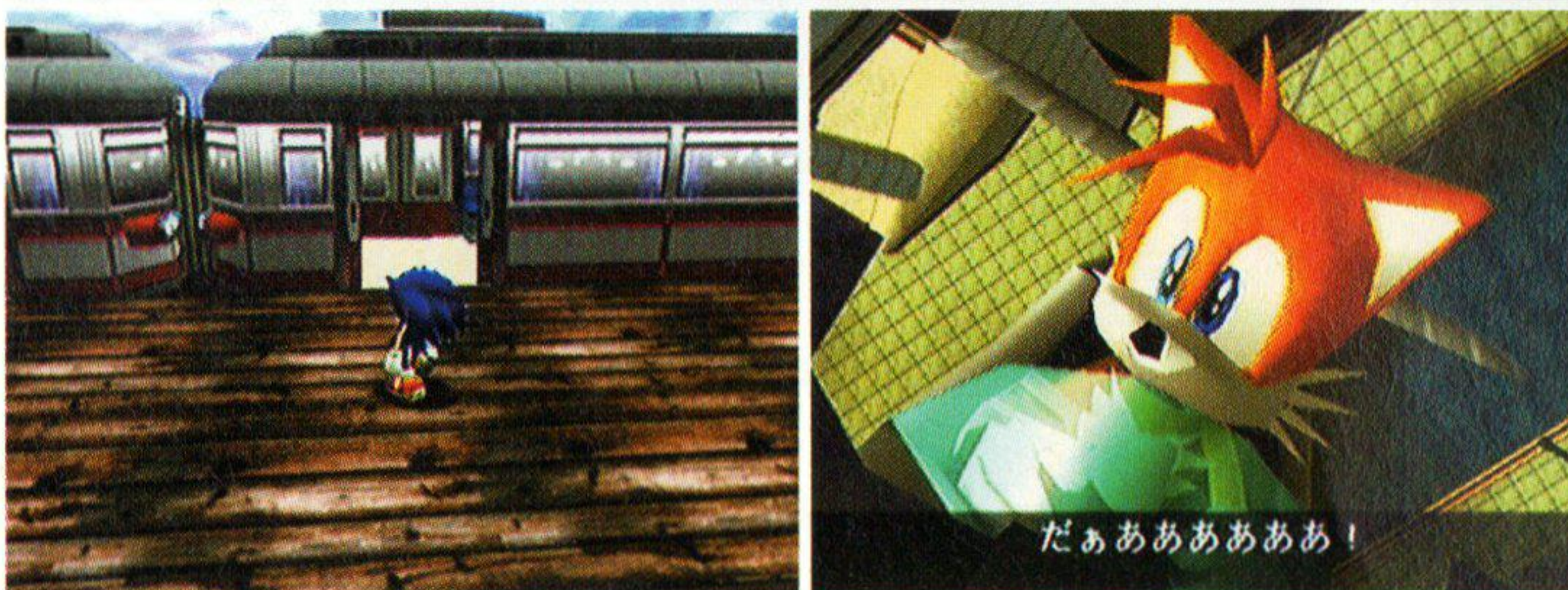


Despite the fact that this game is almost entirely in Japanese, and it's been years since the last release, Sonic veterans should know the story by now. First and foremost, you control Sonic; though you can play certain levels as one of his various friends – all of whom are fighting against the evil (don't make me laugh) Dr. Eggman (or Robotnik as he's known in the West) in a bid to collect the Chaos Emeralds. Yes, I know you've



Without a doubt, *Sonic Adventure* is the fastest, most detailed game ever to appear on any format. Stunning would be an understatement

The A-life system, which utilises the VMS unit, is a fantastic little aside to *Sonic Adventure* and a great game in its own right. You hatch Chaos eggs in your own garden, and the little creatures that come out of them can take on characteristics of the animals Sonic rescues on the adventure levels to create new life forms. You can race these new creations against others, and even keep one of the Chaos' inside your VMS to raise as a virtual pet.



Plot? Well as it turns out, there is one – and it's heavily scripted compared to previous games, with Sonic and his

friends all voiced by prominent anime voice actors. Characters present include the stalwarts Sonic, Tails, Knuckles and Amy, with new players Big the Cat and the powerful mecha E-102 (isn't this a food colouring?) thrown in for extra variation. You can complete the game using one character and then play the others in sequence if you wish, and it's also possible to play each adventure a little at a time.

Gameplay-wise, *Sonic Adventure* is difficult to describe, on account of all the different experiences on offer. There are no two sections that feel quite the same, and while this is a Sonic game, the designers have opted for a variation on the 'free flow' style of gaming present in *Nights* – their innovative action 'experience' for the Saturn (it can barely be described as a game, though this is not to its detriment).

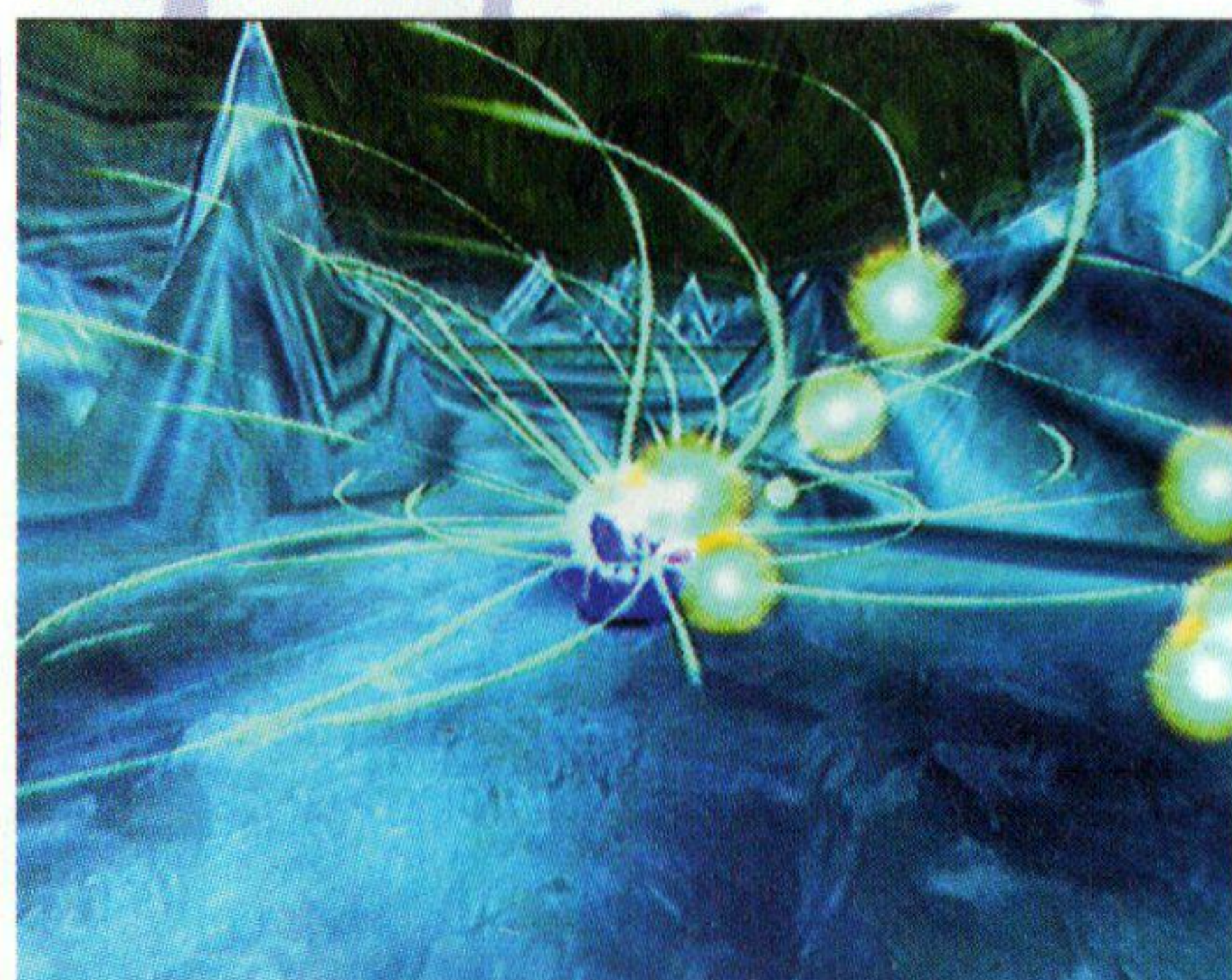
Of course there's more to Sonic than that; this is a 3D platform game and in many ways – certainly in the exploration sections – it follows the conventions of the genre. However, there aren't many predefined rules in *Sonic Adventure*; you take each level as it comes and the

emphasis is very much on the effect the game is having on the player as opposed to how the player affects the game. In many of Sonic's sections, the action will (unsurprisingly) speed up to an incredible rate – so much so that you don't always feel entirely in control. This isn't a fault with the gameplay; these levels are designed to act as an

adrenaline rush from start to finish.

Sonic Adventure takes the roller coaster highs present in previous Sonic games to new levels, somehow adding the euphoria of *Nights* into the bargain. A lot of this is down to the new perspective and the fact that aesthetically, *Sonic Adventure* is (almost) flawless, but as a package it's been expertly handled; the mad frantic rush that defines a Sonic game is still there, and yet it's something new entirely.

Getting down to business now: what,



comes the cry from the four corners of the world, are the graphics like? Put simply, they're the greatest thing ever seen on a home console. Well, of course they are – what else could they be? The game bounces between enormous and fantastically detailed cityscapes, enclosed jungle, full-screen video quality FMV and eye-popping action set pieces.

**SONIC
IE BARGAIN**

There's literally no way to convey the first time you go tearing down the pier on Emerald Coast at a blistering breakneck speed with an enormous killer whale matching your pace and tearing up the planks behind you. Or the adrenaline high of bombing down a mountain on a snowboard with an avalanche at your heels and Badnik bombers hurling

Part of the game's main interface is a living, breathing city. Watch in amazement as cars screech to a halt as you try to cross a zebra crossing





Above: the chief bad guy in *Sonic Adventure* is a primeval force known as Chaos

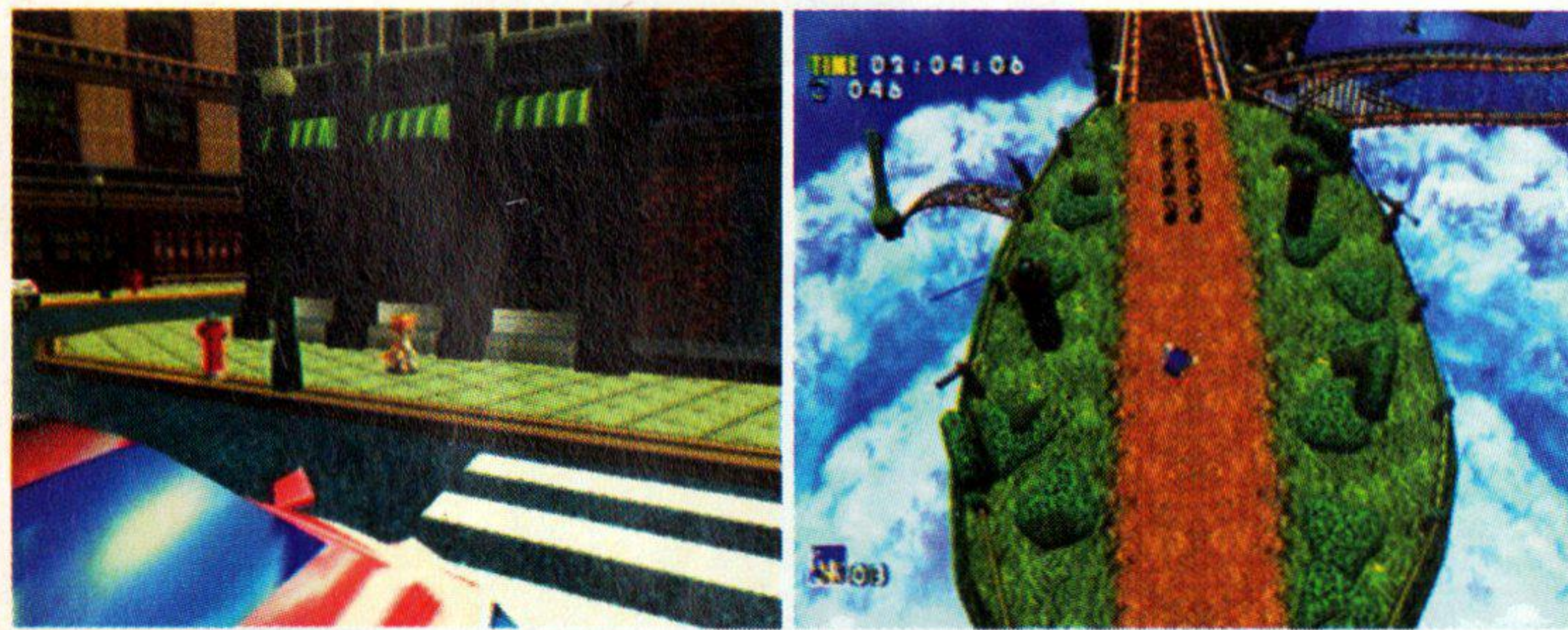
explosives at every side. The new 3D perspective doesn't mark the only departure for Sonic in this game. Fans of the 16-bit predecessors will be used to plinkety tunes, cheerful early 90s synth and the old "Se-gaaaaa" jingle in the audio department. Naaaah... this is (nearly) the twenty-first century! Sonic Team have spared no expense in hiring a band of moody, grungy Metallica sound-a-likes. The result is a thumping soundtrack that even a die-hard *WipeOut* fan wouldn't be ashamed to have on their stereo. Not that the traditions have been entirely forgotten of course – there's plenty of amiable chip music to remain in keeping with the fact that you're still playing cute little fuzzy creatures, no matter how hip they may be. However, for once it's nice to see that someone's gone

the extra mile instead of voting to give the company idol singer one more shot at producing music that people will take seriously.

Return of the A-life

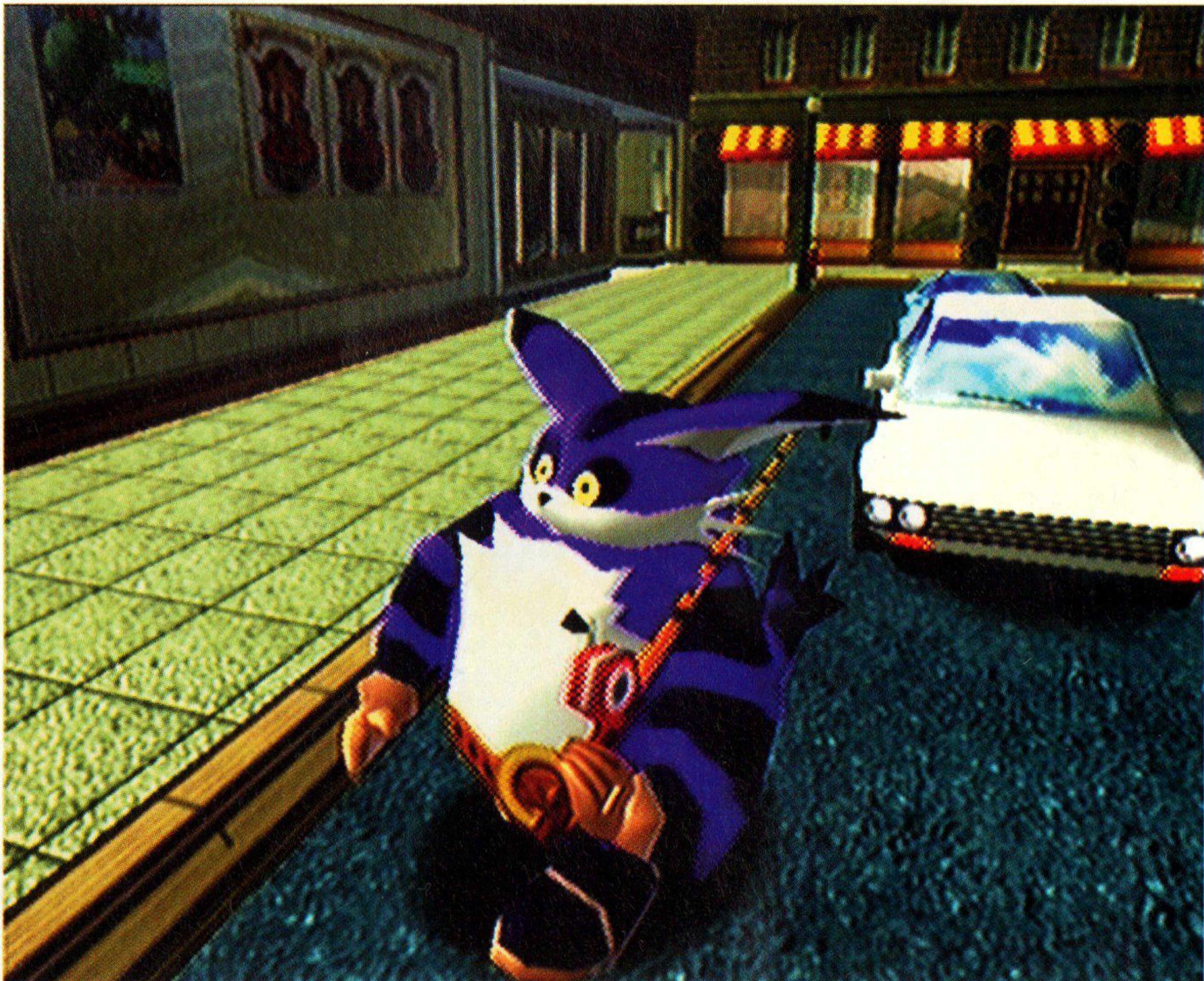
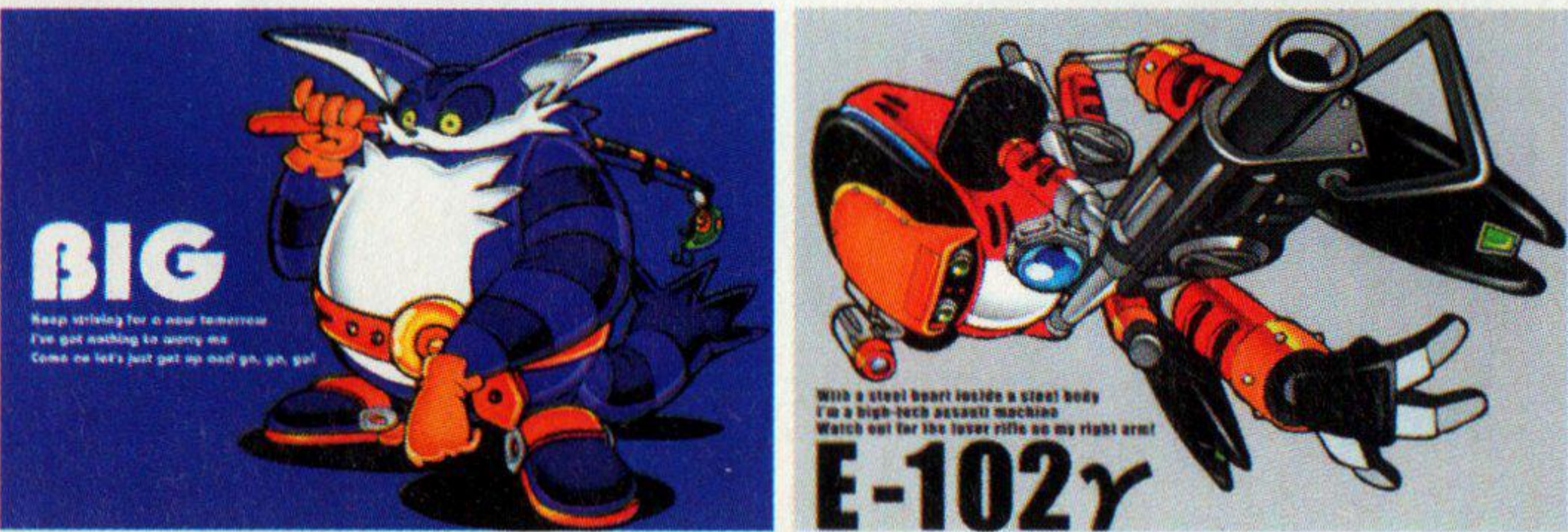
Despite the obvious eye candy, *Sonic Adventure* is not to be taken lightly. Naturally, it's a showcase for the Dreamcast in terms of the excellent graphics and the easily accessible gameplay. Delve deeper into the game, and you'll be pushed to find an experience more varied than this. A huge amount of vastly differing sections are on offer, including an excellent artificial life simulator whereby you can raise the 'Chaos' babies that live within Sonic's world – you can even download them into the VMS in order to raise their

stats independent of the Dreamcast. The gameplay variants aren't limited to sub-games either. There's a *Panzer Dragoon*-style shoot-'em-up incorporated into Tails' adventure utilising his aeroplane in order to attack Eggman's aircraft carrier. All this obviously needs something to hold it together, and *Sonic Adventure* achieves this by employing an RPG-style environment for the exploration sections, where you can walk around and talk to people – some will give you clues as to where to go next. There are a couple of puzzles which you have to solve to access some areas, though the answers to these are given away by the glowing 'hint' balls that float around the levels. Obviously, players will experience some difficulty with these sections if they don't speak



NEW AND OLD

Sega's promotional art for *Sonic Adventure* is of the 2D variety. Here's some original designs for characters from the game, featuring new characters Big the Cat and the robot E-102 among the favourites.



any Japanese, though it should be possible to progress by employing a little trial and error. The good news is that should you get stuck with one character, you can simply pick another one to play as and go back to the previous one later.

As previously mentioned, there are six different characters in *Sonic Adventure*, and each offers a different game to play. Sonic's specialty is blinding speed, of course. Tails, on the other hand, gets to play a selection of the same levels, but his object is to race Sonic to the end (a process made easier by his helicopter tails). Knuckles' levels are played as a treasure hunt, and in each section you must use his climbing and gliding powers to locate three crystal shards concealed in boxes, badniks and generally in difficult places to get to. Amy's game, in a sexist but hilariously sweet twist, has her running for her life from a giant robot on each level with nothing but the biggest hammer you've ever seen for protection. Meanwhile E-102 (or 'Gamma' to his mates) is a walking steel nightmare who rebels against Robotnik after Amy persuades him to help rescue the wittle birdies. (Aaaaah...) Finally, and definitely most bizarrely, Big the Cat is a slow-witted fisherman who doesn't really understand

game in obscure places. There are 120 of these emblems, and it's going to be back to the same blood, sweat and tears of digging up Mario's 125 power stars if you're going to win even a fraction of them.

A spiky problem

Sadly, though, most games have a downside, and here's where we have to break the bad news. I've been prompting at it, but it's been almost too hard to relay, given that the game is otherwise so excellent. And the problem with *Sonic Adventure* could have so easily been sorted out, had Sega planned things better. But if there's one thing that could possibly make you stop and think about making a purchase of one the most beautiful, inspired, involved and breathless games in video game history, it's the bugs. *Sonic Adventure* certainly has more than its fair share. Reports have been pouring in from all corners of the Internet ever since this game hit the shelves, and due to one irritating bug that crops up from time to time, we've experienced characters actually falling through the graphics composing the floor and into the abyss on a few occasions, causing the loss of a life.

But small bugs aside – sadly most



out of reality.

The main reason why the bugs and unpolished graphics are present in this game is the fact that Sega underestimated the time it would take them to complete *Sonic Adventure*. With the launch of the Dreamcast imminent, they found themselves lacking a flagship game to accompany the release.

Consumers in Japan were purchasing Dreamcasts anyway, but they were expecting to be able to buy this

much-anticipated title, and Sega could only afford to delay it for a month after launch. But the ultimate question is – do the bugs spoil your enjoyment of the game? We don't think so, and judging by the reactions of other players we've spoken to on the subject, we're not alone. It looks as if Sega will have to do something about *Sonic Adventure*'s faults before the Western release, and by the time the game reaches these shores, standards will be even higher.

Sega have a good year to iron the flaws out of this particular masterpiece, and if precedent is anything to go by we should see a polished version to accompany the UK launch of Dreamcast. But then, when a game is THIS good, a year is an awfully long time to wait... **Rachel**

DESPITE THE OBVIOUS EYE CANDY, SONIC ADVENTURE IS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY. DELVE DEEPER INTO THE GAME, AND YOU'LL BE PUSHED TO FIND AN EXPERIENCE MORE VARIED

any of this and just wants his pet frog back. His levels are completed by catching fish, in a sub-game which now seems obligatory in Japanese games since its revival in PlayStation *Breath of Fire* and N64 *Zelda*!

Skid marks

The hidden depths of *Sonic Adventure* only truly rise, though, once you take a look at the stat screen for each section. Every level a character goes through contains three Sonic Emblems which are awarded for completing tasks such as finishing with a set number of rings or finding hidden containers. There are also a handful of them which are awarded for excellence in the mini-games which crop up, as well as a number ferreted away throughout the

games these days have them, after all – one problem that really does stand out is the whole area of 3D glitches. Between mip-mapping and Sonic Team's expertise, the graphics of *Sonic Adventure* are nearly unfaultable – but only nearly. Yes, the curse of pop-up has returned to haunt us once again. It can be really irritating when the levels are the sizes they are here, to know that you could be looking straight at a vital object which will remain stubbornly invisible until within a predefined range. Of course this is a fault of 3D games in general, and to be fair anything that Sonic can see on the horizon is likely to be an inch from his face in two seconds and a distant memory two seconds after that, but it does jar when entire train-sized... er... trains suddenly flick in and



This incarnation of Sonic retains many of the previous titles' traits – many of the stunning moves have little player participation



OTHER FORMATS?

PC ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Perhaps in the distant future, but Sega have only released PC games in the past when their console is doing badly. Let's hope not then.

N64 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Not a chance, naturally. Nintendo may not be Sega's biggest rivals anymore, but Sega aren't about to pull them out of the water with releases for their machine...

N64 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
You'd be crazy to even consider it.

IMPORT SOFTWARE SUPPLIED BY: PLAYGROUND PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Sonic Adventure
GRAPHICS	94
SOUND	90
PLAYABILITY	93
OVERALL	93
Out of 100	



SOUTH PARK

Well, you've **laughed** at the **series**, **heard the single** and bought the t-shirt, the key-ring, the **soft toys** and all the **other merchandise**, so now you want to play the video game, yeah? **Sucker.**



INFORMATION

FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Acclaim Entertainment
DEVELOPER	Iguana Entertainment
STYLE	First-Person Shooter
RELEASE	Out Now
PLAYGROUND PRICE	£54.99
PLAYERS	1-4
RUMBLE PAK	Yes
MEMORY PAK	Two Blocks
EXPANSION PAK	Yes

TAKING CONTROL

The intro is cool enough. It is the intro to the cartoon series translated into 3D, complete with the theme music. However, (reviewer's favourite word) as soon as you start playing the game it's a case of 'My God, what have they done?' This isn't the South Park I know, it's just some crappy shooting game with a load of bleeped-out swearing.



When I wrote the feature on *South Park* in issue two of *Total CONTROL*, the only thing I had seen of the N64 game was a few screenshots and a load of PR hyperbole, but I knew it was being

it, and I regret to inform you that far from kicking ass, this computer game sucks goats with a vengeance.

What we have here is one of the most blatant attempts to jump on a bandwagon that I have ever seen. South

IGUANA ARE A VERY TALENTED DEVELOPMENT COMPANY WITH A LIST OF SUPERB GAMES TO THEIR CREDIT, INCLUDING TUROK 1 AND 2

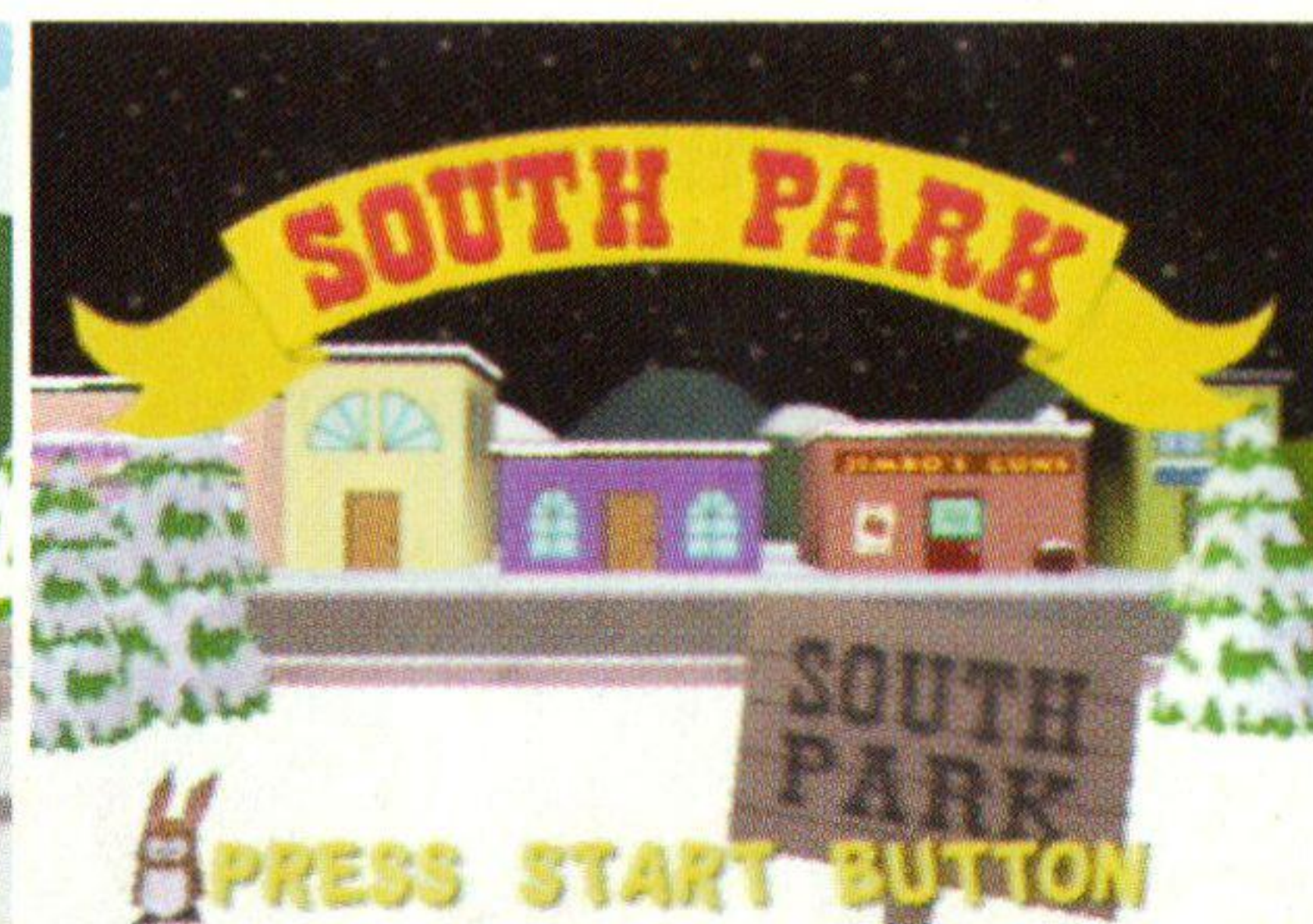
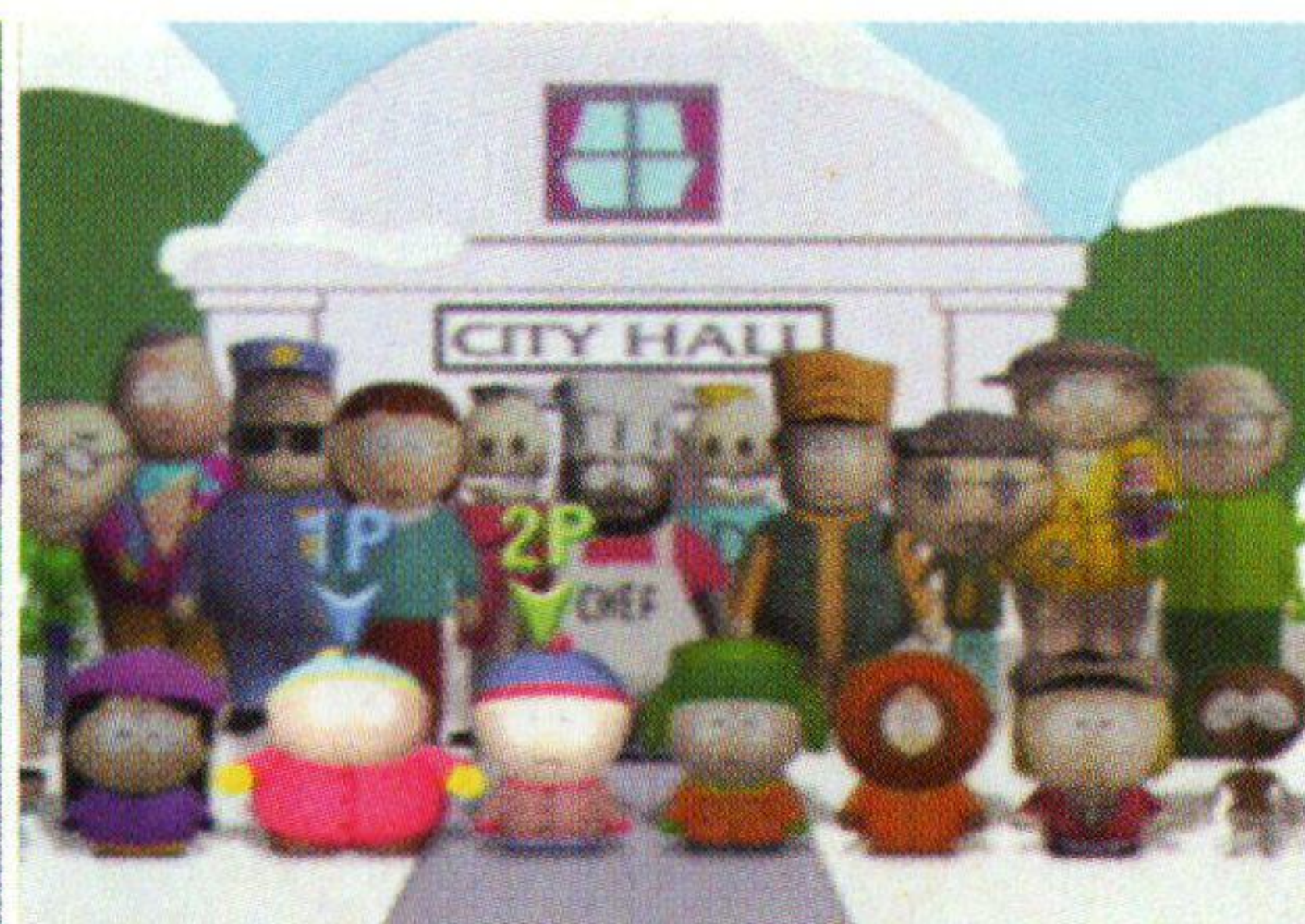
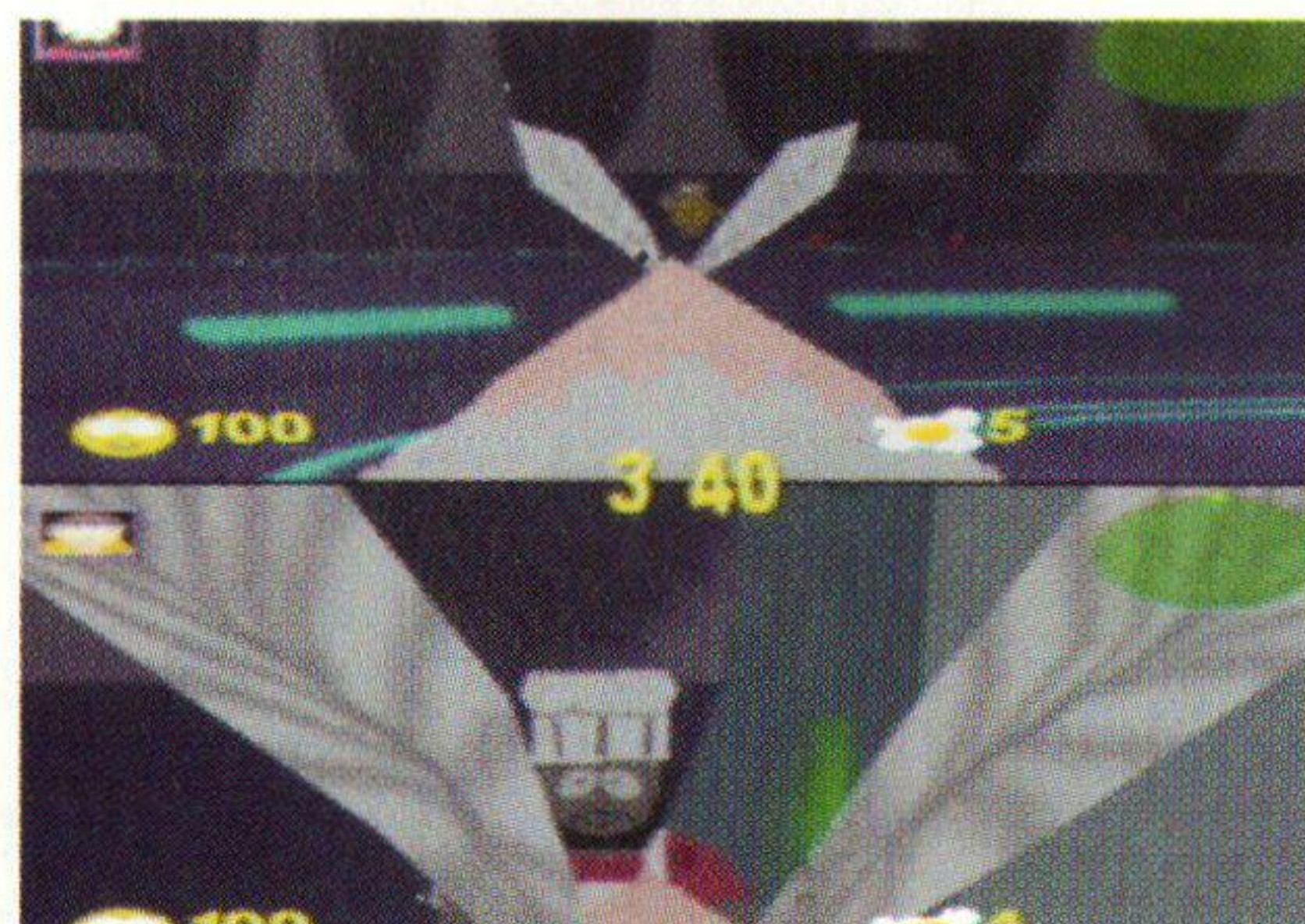
developed by Iguana and was supposed to be based on the powerful *Turok 2* 3D engine, and on the basis of that information I had high hopes for the *South Park* game. Well, now I've played

Park has gone from being a late-night cult comedy with a small but enthusiastic audience to a major merchandising cash-cow which is being milked by everyone who can get a

licence. The American TV company Comedy Central, who control the rights to the title, must be laughing all the way to the bank, and Acclaim, the publishers of this lame excuse for a game, are right behind them.

Die, evil turkey

The whole point of the *South Park* series is that it is side-splittingly funny, but the marketing people who have cashed in it don't appear to care. This *South Park* game is almost totally lacking in humour. The only really funny moment occurs in the opening sequence, when Iguana's

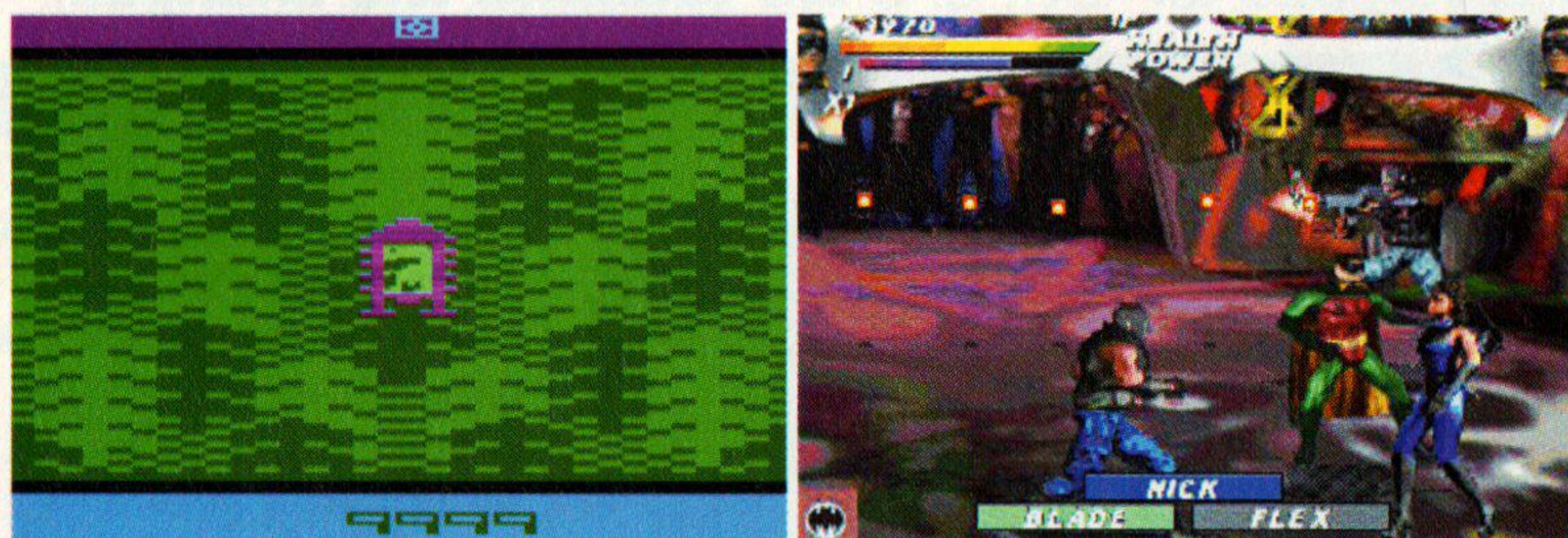


All the characters are there in the multiplayer game, but there's no sign of any of them in the story game. South Park is deserted

LICENCE REVOKED

There is a long history of cash-in games based on TV series and movies, and most of them have been abysmal. Noteworthy examples include the execrable 1982 Atari ET game, which thankfully sank without trace. Rumour has it that Atari buried truckloads of them out in the desert – a fate they richly deserved.

Acclaim are no strangers to this dodgy practice, having previously perpetrated *Batman Forever* in broad daylight. This 1996 release was another game which tried to cash in on a licence agreement, and also flopped horribly. My particular favourite was *Waterworld*. Not only was the movie truly awful, but the game, published by Interplay in 1997, was one of the most appalling pieces of rubbish ever to be dropped into my rotating knives.



namesake logo lizard bites Kenny's head off, providing a cue for the most famous quote from the series. Other than that, the whole sorry effort is about as funny as toothache. The cast of secondary characters from the series who provide much of the humour are completely absent from the single-player game, apart from Chef, who turns up in cut scenes between levels to advance the so-called plot. He might as well have stayed in bed, because all you have to do is follow the completely linear levels from start to finish, blasting everything you meet. This goes on until you meet the end of level boss, cleverly called a 'Boss', then you blast that as well. Enemies include mad robots, evil toys, clones of Big Gay Al, and, appropriately enough, turkeys.

Bunch of hippy crap

The levels appear to have been designed by a four-year-old and contain little of interest. When you find yourself surrounded by white ground, with the

middle distance obscured by white fog, and the only things in sight are a few crudely drawn trees and boulders, you have to wonder just why the hell you are here. The 'action', such as it is, is mindless and repetitive. The enemies, whether they be turkeys, cows or robots, simply run towards you, following a predictable zig-zag path. As long as you have enough ammunition you can easily blast them without even aiming.

The weapons are mildly amusing the first time you see them, especially the sniper chicken and the cow launcher, but the joke soon becomes stale. The same is true of the repetitive quotes from the kids. The twentieth time you hear Cartman scream the same insult, your hand reaches for the volume control of its own volition. The game's intro screen mimics the disclaimer that appears at the beginning of each episode by claiming that, due to its content, it should not be played by anyone. I can only concur.



The weapons are pretty cool, especially the sniper zoom-in for the chicken

Not a pretty sight

Iguana are a very talented development company with a list of superb games to their credit, including *Turok 1* and *2*, and the N64 version of *Forsaken*. With a growing reputation like theirs, I cannot understand why they would want to churn out dross like this. It really does look as though they have made no effort with this game at all. The graphics are crude, flat textured and angular, and the distance fogging is obtrusive and annoying. I know the series isn't exactly famous for state of the art animation, but for the price Acclaim will be charging, you have a right to expect a little more effort. Even with the expansion pack providing high-res graphics, the overwhelming impression is of a game that has been thrown together overnight for the express purpose of making a quick buck.

The only good part of the game is the multiplayer option. The more levels you complete in the single player game, the more characters you have to choose from in the split screen mode, including Starvin' Marvin, Terrence and Philip, Officer Barbrady and many others. Due to the simplified graphics the multiplayer game runs more smoothly than some others, and plays wells, although it's no *Goldeneye*. The question is, do you want to buy it for that reason alone, because I can't think of another. **Cliff**



OTHER FORMATS?

PC

This is going to bomb no matter what format it is released on, but *South Park* will be appearing on a PC near you sometime soon

PlayStation

It's hardly worth Iguana's time to do the conversion, but a PlayStation version is promised, or should that be threatened?

Dreamcast

Hopefully Sega wouldn't allow their new baby to be sullied by such rubbish, so don't worry about it.

IMPORT
SOFTWARE
SUPPLIED BY:

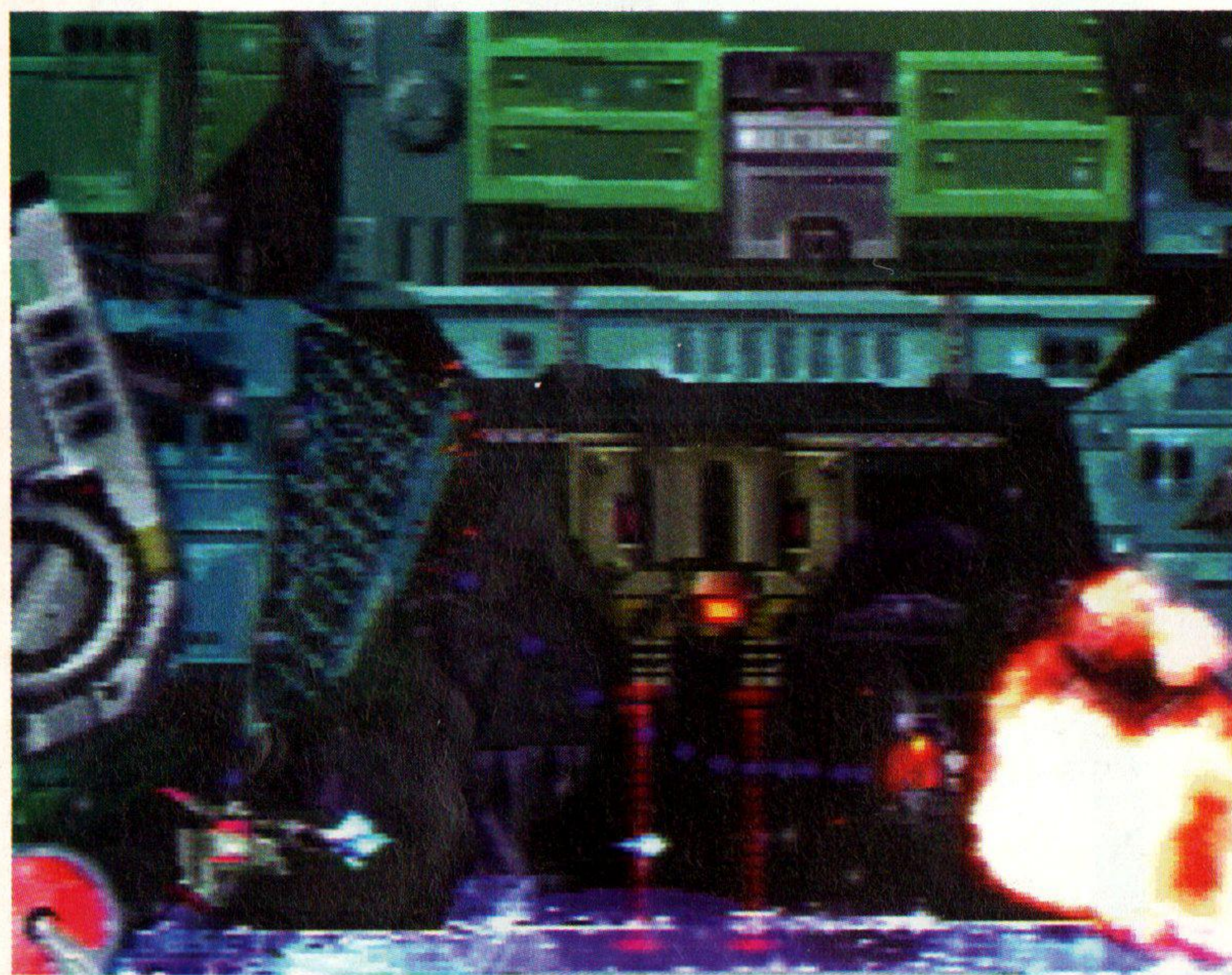
PLAYGROUND
PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

GAME NAME	South Park
GRAPHICS	28
SOUND	17
PLAYABILITY	20
OVERALL	24
Out of 100	



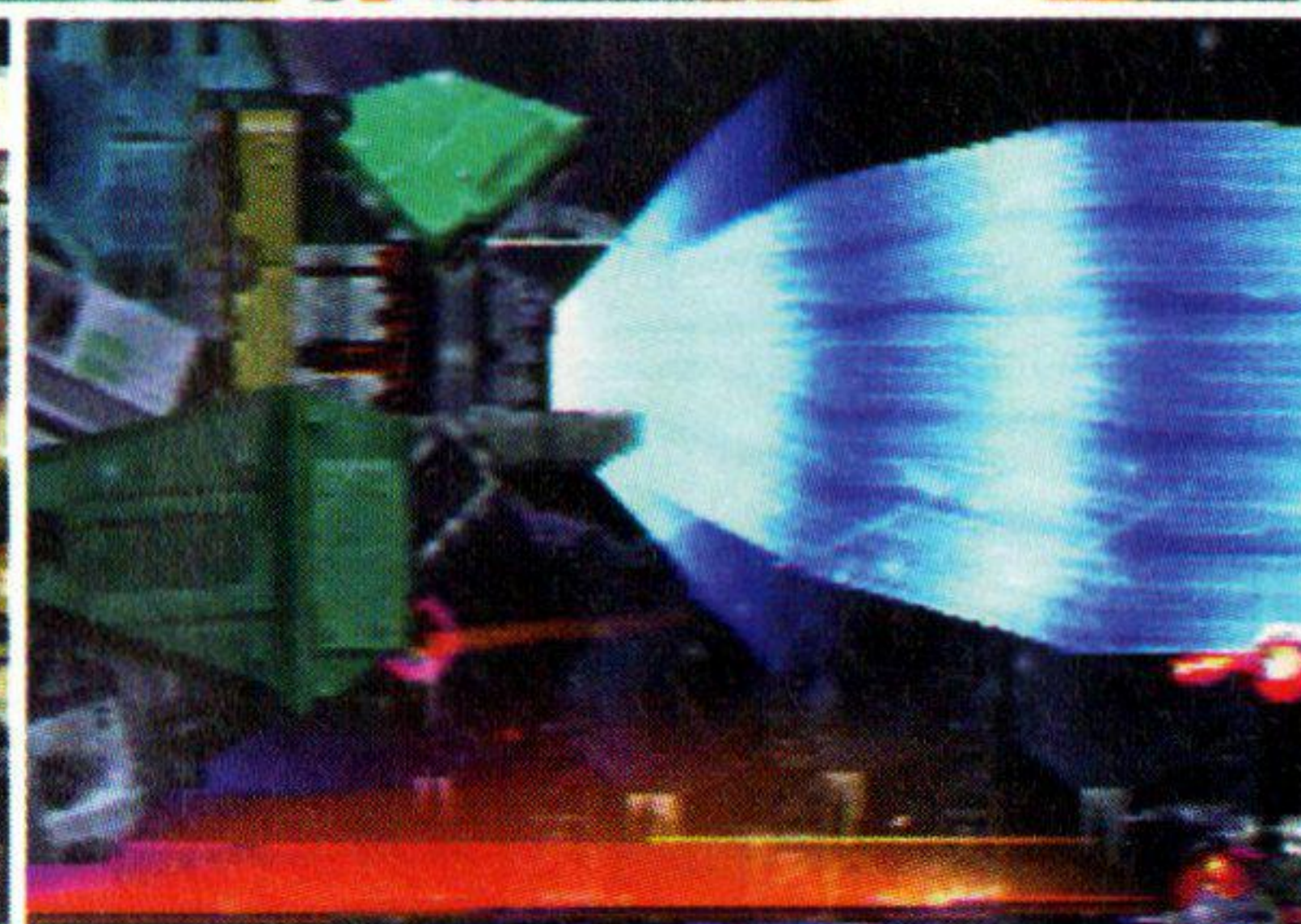
R-TYPE DELTA



It's been a while since the original *R-Type* stormed onto the 16-Bit consoles, but now it's been revamped for '99, and we evaluate the changes.

TAKING CONTROL

It has to be said that it's been a time since I last played *R-Type*, but this brought many fond memories flooding back. The essentials of the first game haven't changed much, and as a huge fan of the prequels and many similar games on the Amiga, it was good to see that this is every bit as good as I remembered the first game to be.



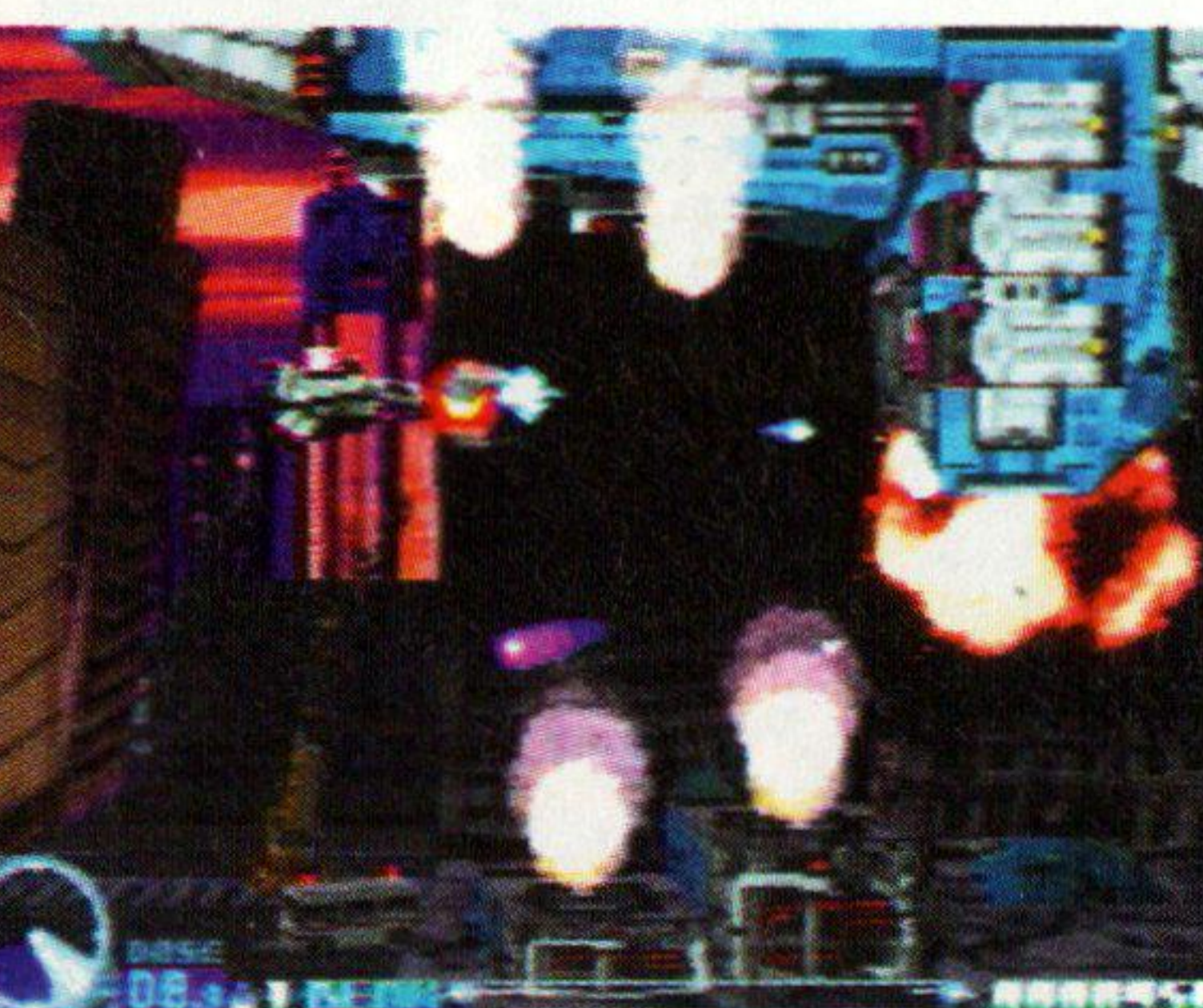
INFORMATION

FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Irem Software Engineering
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Shoot-'em-up
RELEASE	Out Now
PLAYGROUND PRICE	£54.99
PLAYERS	One
ANALOGUE	No
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block

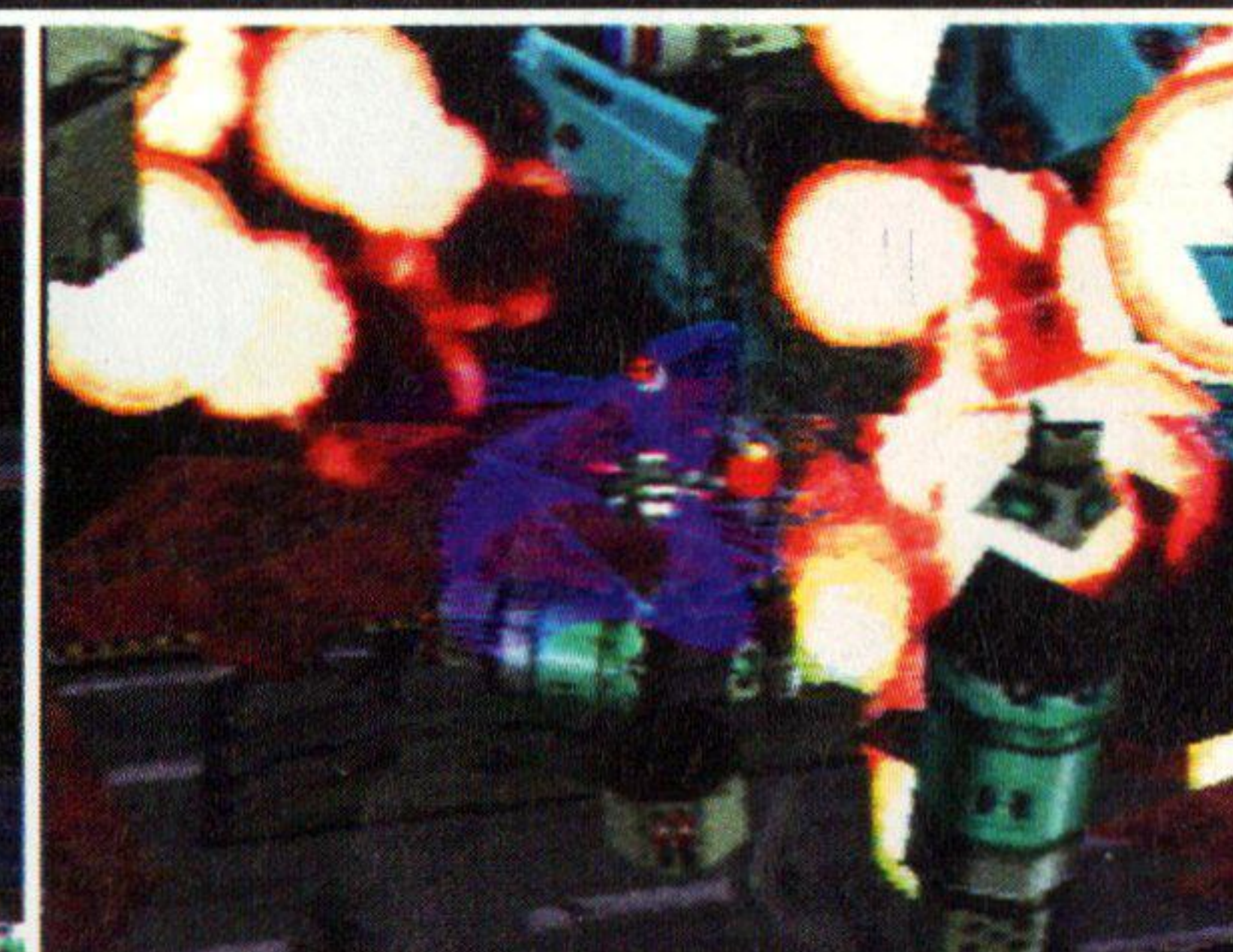
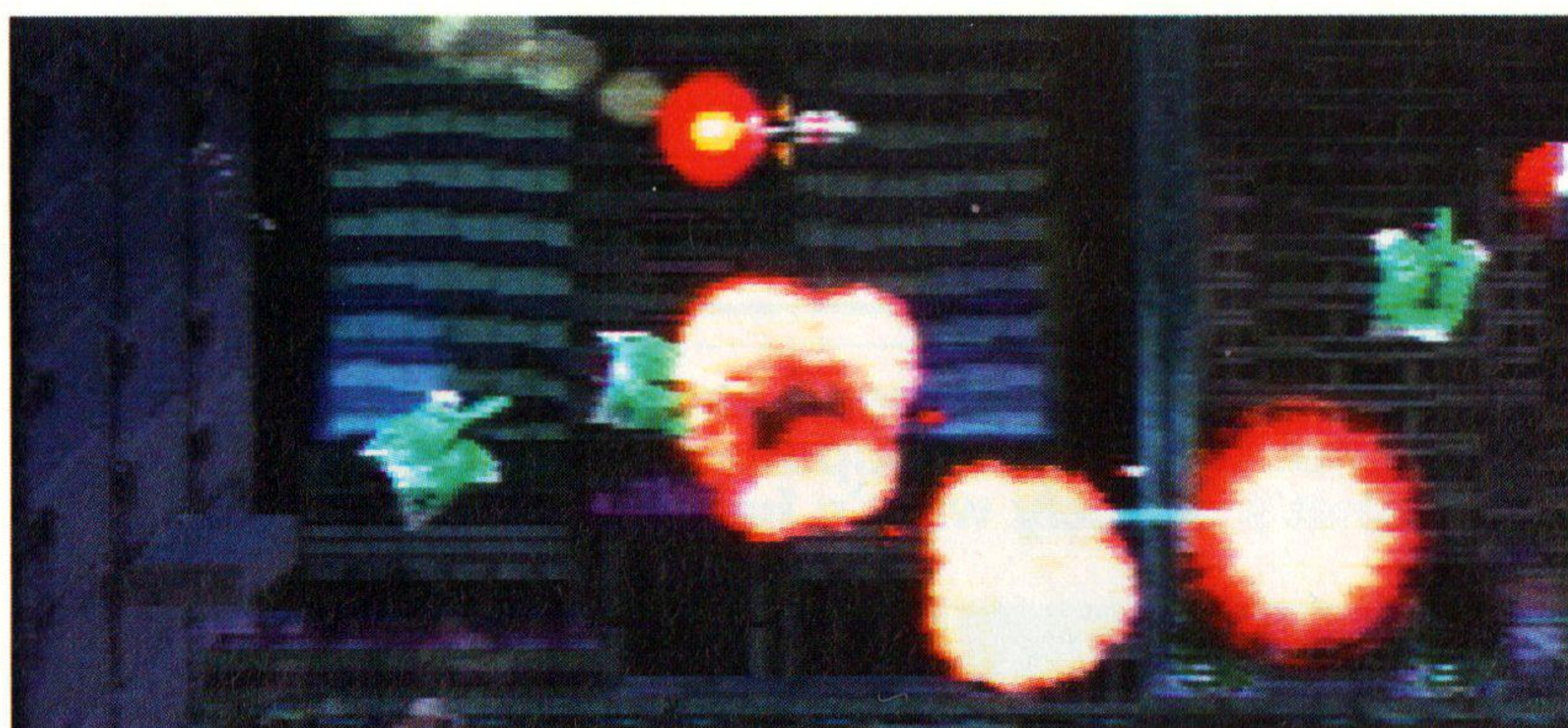
In the good old 16-Bit days of 2D graphics and Parallax scrolling, sideways scrolling shoot-'em-ups reigned supreme. *R-Type* and its sequel were perhaps the best know of them all, appearing on every major computer format of the time. Most fans of the genre have no doubt since been converted to first-person shoot-'em-ups such as *Goldeneye*, *Half-Life* and *Quake II*, but in a way it has been a choice made for us – when was the last time you saw a decent 2D shoot-'em-up?

The problem with creating a game in this genre today mostly concerns the graphics – not that it should do, but good presentation and fancy special effects do help publishers to shift the title and generate a certain amount of hype. *R-Type Delta* doesn't really have much of a problem with this. Apart from being a follow-up to one of the most well-known shooters ever, there are some very nice graphics on show. For all intents and purposes it's a 2D game – at any point you can move only in a vertical or horizontal direction –

but the background, enemies and ships are entirely three-dimensional. While the camera never spins over or around your ship during a firefight, at certain points it shifts around to show the arrival of boss characters or a mid-level change in direction. The effect can at times make for some excellent eye candy, and is performed in such a way that it never confuses or gets in the way of the action. Several games have attempted to use pre-rendered video for the background and usually failed in the process, but this is all drawn entirely in real-time, and the advantages of using the method become apparent almost immediately. Many of the enemies move in and out of the foreground, as do many of the buildings and other objects. The 3D real-time graphics help to generate a realistic world; if you move in one direction, the background tilts. You don't feel at all separated from the backdrop, and as a result the game is all the more hectic. You really need to pay attention to everything.



At any point you can alter the speed of your ship to one of four settings. Thankfully, hitting the scenery will not damage you



SHIPPING WELL

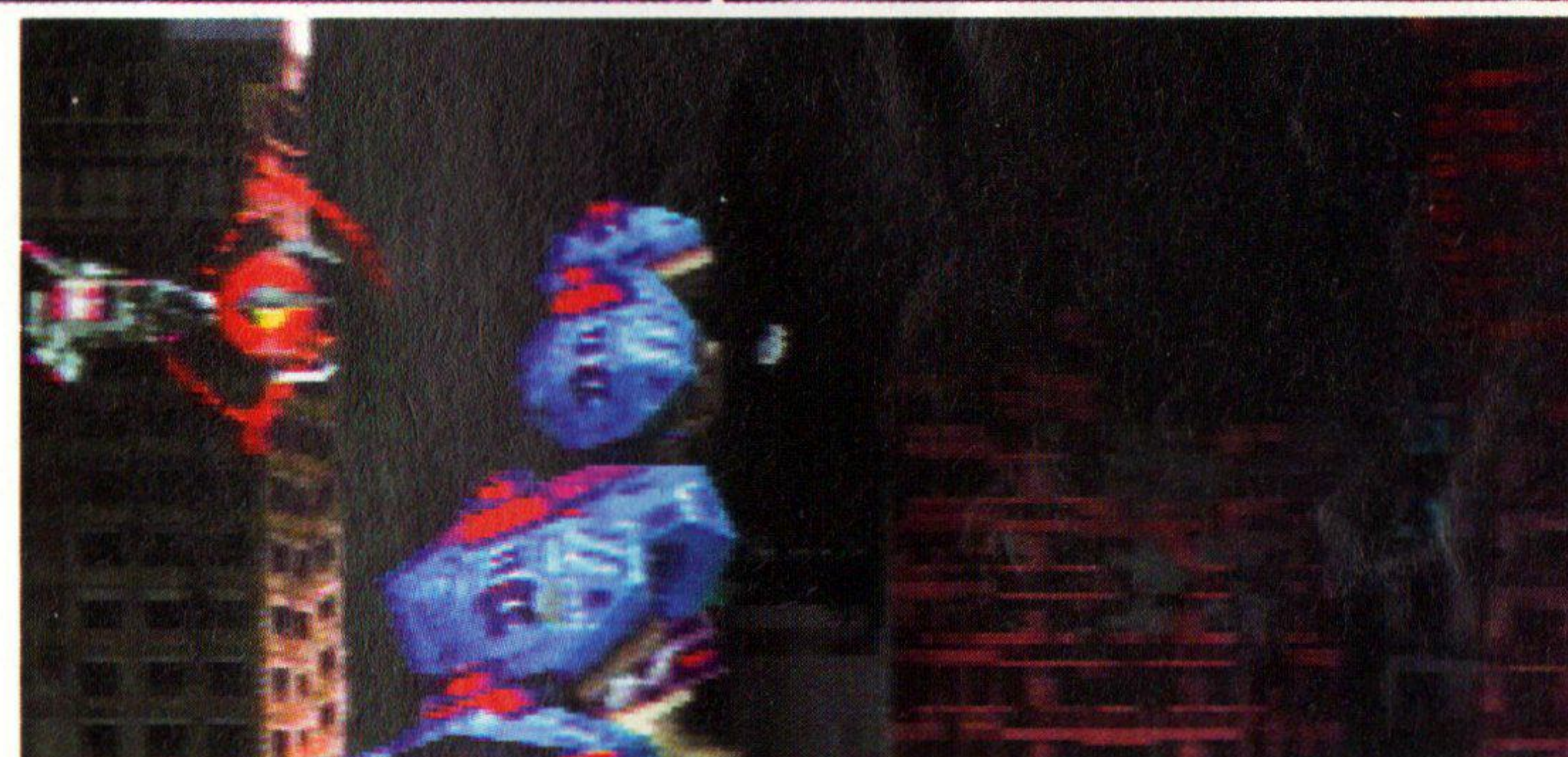
The three ships available vary significantly. To begin with you'll probably stick to just one, but each not only has a different mega weapon to use, but the power-ups for the force weapon are also different, meaning you must adjust your approach through the level to suit it. In effect, as well as the three standard difficulty settings, each ship offers a different game mode.



The force will be with you

The game itself is surprisingly complicated for a shoot-'em up, mostly because of the force device add-on, which really makes the game what it is. There are three ships to choose from, and while they all vary quite a lot, each remains exactly the same throughout the game – there are no power-ups for the blaster gun, no speed boosts, and no health pick-ups. The only weapon you have of any noticeable effect needs to be charged for a while before use; the power is shown along the bottom of the screen and, if held at full for a few seconds, a megablast may be unleashed, inflicting huge damage on all oncoming ships. The

add-ons such as missile launchers, bit pods (that help protect your ship) and the force device. When found, the force device floats around the screen. It cannot be destroyed by enemies and instead will absorb the majority of their bullets and every enemy it comes into contact with. When it is absorbing this power a meter is charged in the bottom corner of your screen. As it reaches 100% it can unleash a screen-cleansing discharge – very useful in certain situations. It can also be attached onto either the front or the back of your ship. From here its effect is slightly different; it will still absorb bullets effectively acting as a shield, and because it will only ever take one shot to



only do this if it is attached to your ship. It's a hugely versatile device which can be used in many different ways.

Ghosts from the past

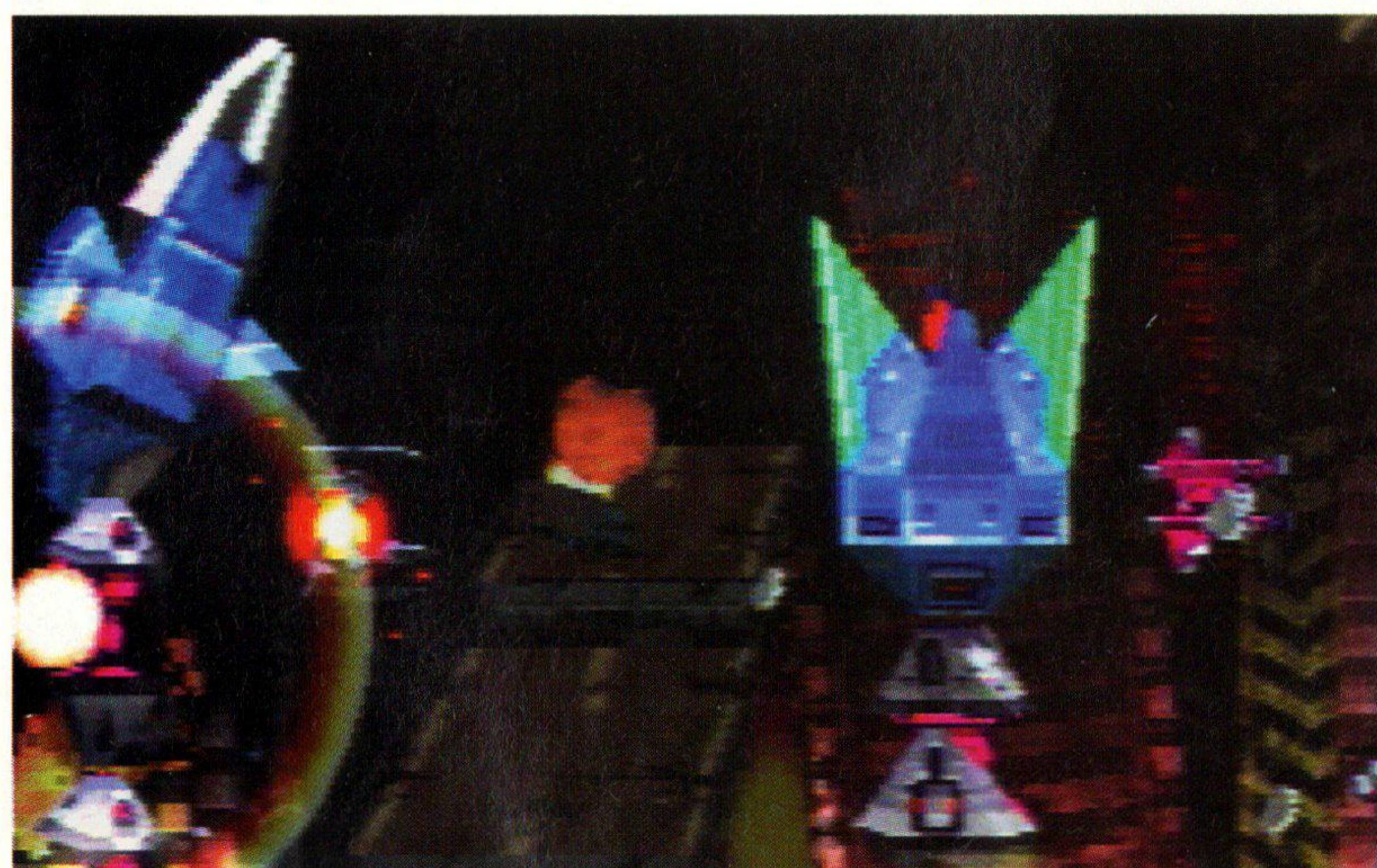
There isn't much to fault the game on other than the standard problems the genre always used to throw up. It's annoying when you die and lose all of your power-ups, but at least the game has been designed in such a way that it never expects you to have a huge arsenal. Another of the old problems with learning the alien's path of attacks can at times frustrate – especially when they burst out from the left or top of the screen with little or no warning – but this is exactly what you would expect from this style of game. Its huge difficulty will constantly drive you mad, but at the same time it's this that will keep you coming back for more.

This might seem like a high score for what is essentially another 2D shooter, but I challenge you to find a better game in this genre. If you've ever liked any other horizontal shoot-'em-ups, you'll not regret picking this one off the shelves. **Will**

ITS HUGE DIFFICULTY WILL CONSTANTLY DRIVE YOU MAD, BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT'S THIS THAT WILL KEEP YOU COMING BACK FOR MORE

effect is different for each vessel, which has quite a substantial effect on the game. There are, however, a number of

destroy your ship, this is vital in certain situations. If upgraded you can also use it to fire certain special weapons, but it will



OTHER FORMATS?

PC ○○○○○

Not at all likely, but there are many old clones of the original games around on this platform.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

It'll probably be a while before the Dreamcast gets a similar game. As far as we know there are no plans for a conversion.

N64 ○○○○○

Don't expect a conversion of *R-Type Delta* to the N64. The closest Nintendo fans will get to this is the SNES versions of its prequels, which are effectively very similar games.

IMPORT
SOFTWARE
SUPPLIED BY:

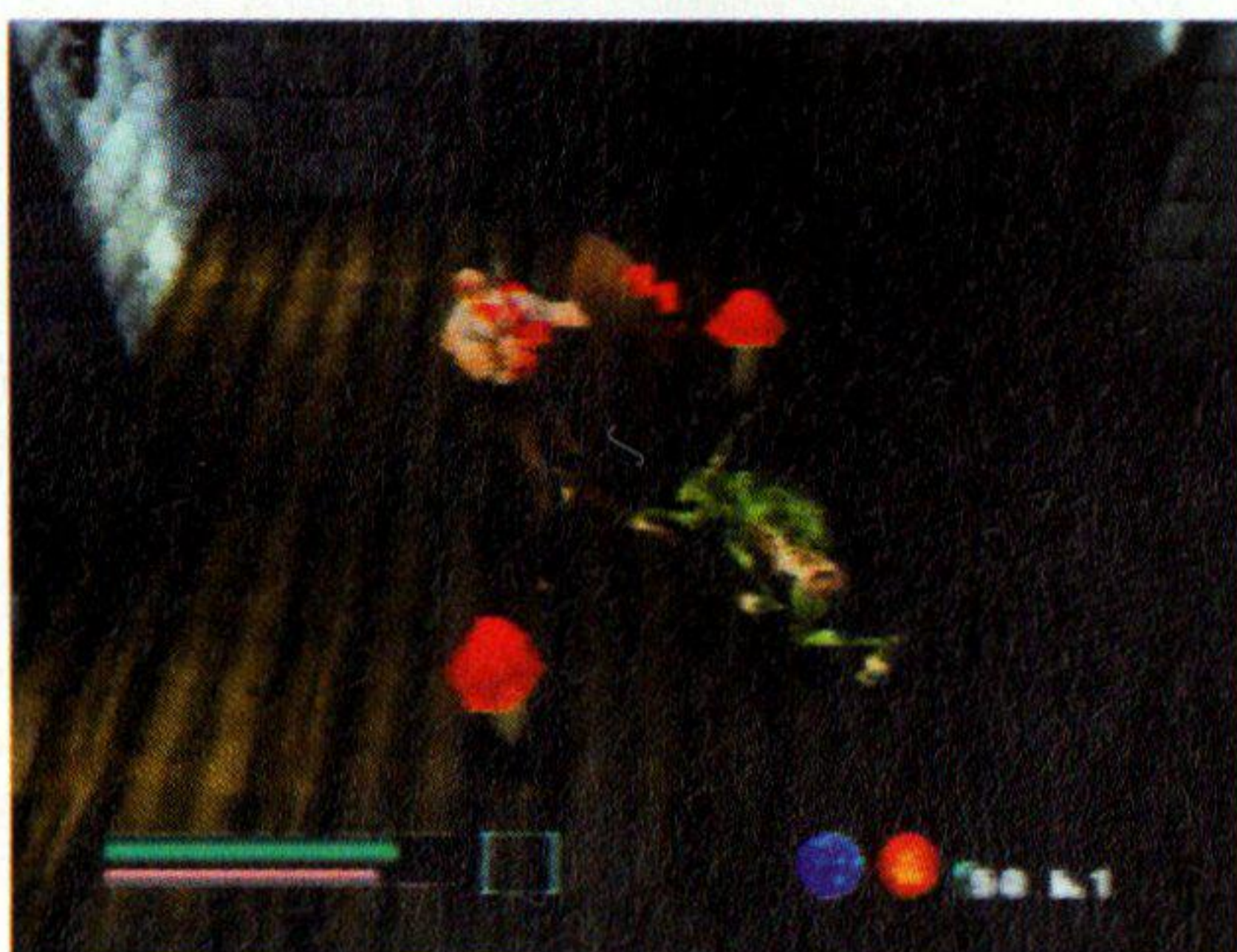
PLAYGROUND
PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

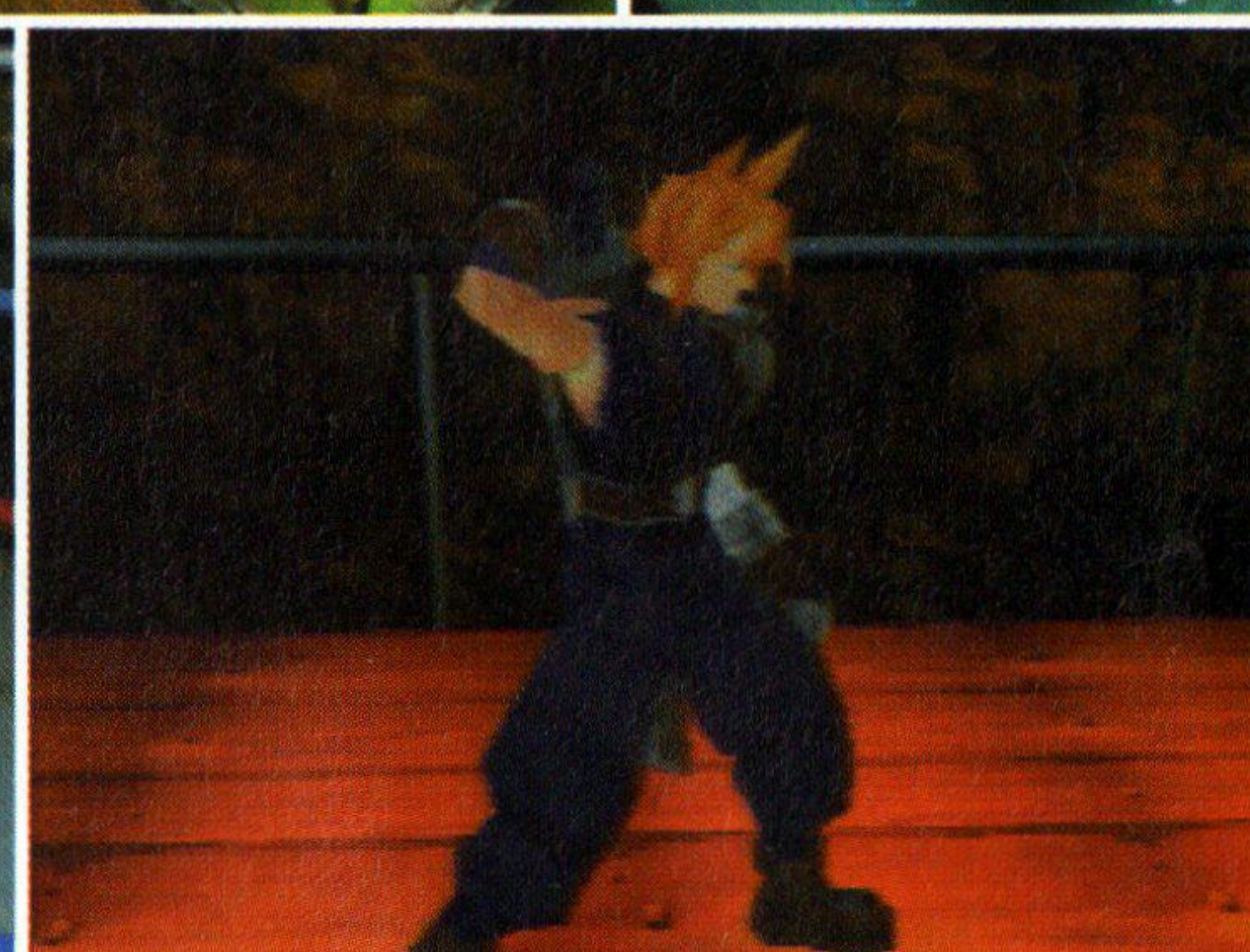
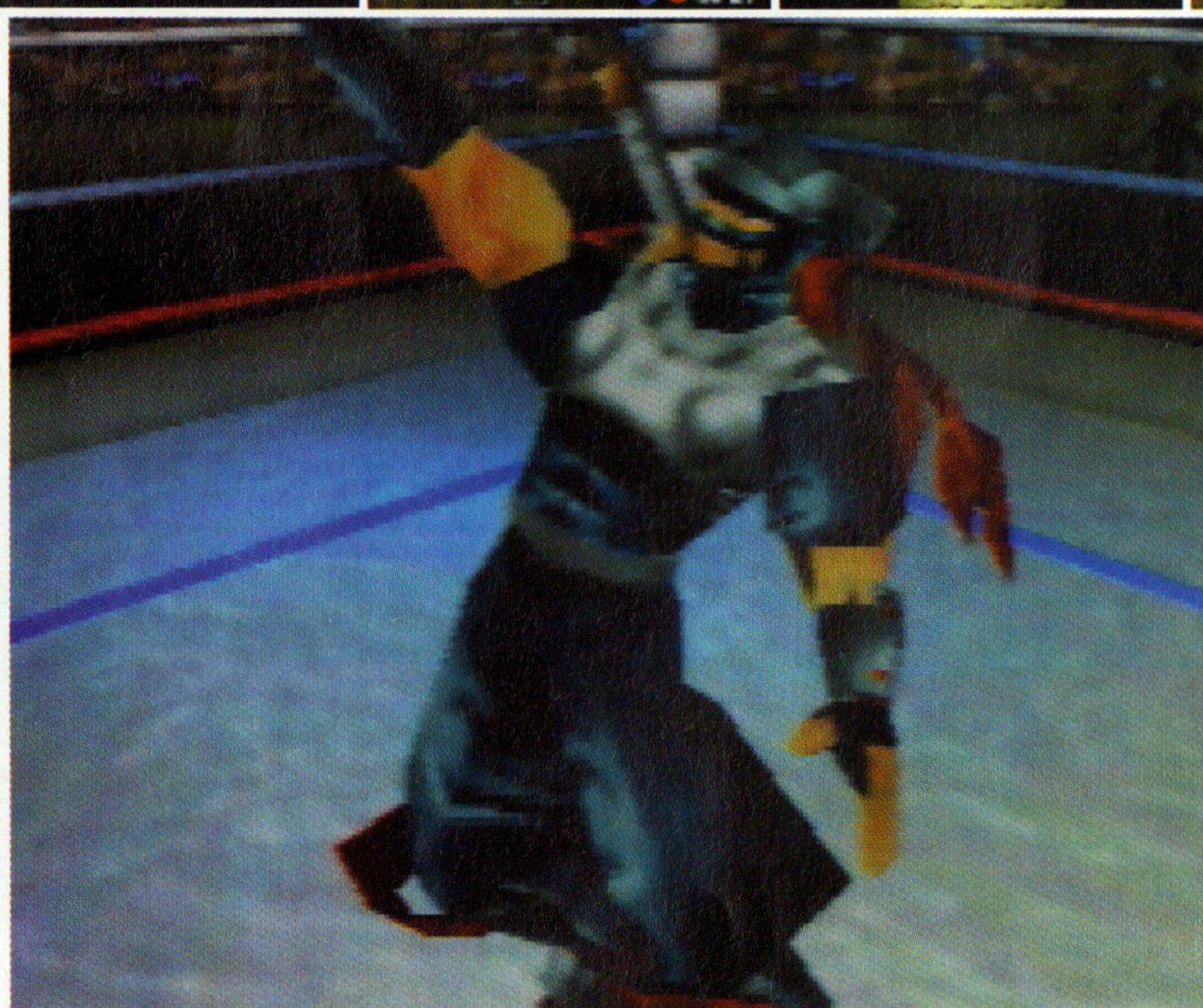
GAME NAME	R-Type Delta
GRAPHICS	82
SOUND	83
PLAYABILITY	93
OVERALL	89
Out of 100	



Ehrgeiz



What would your **ideal development partnership** be? A **dream team** would surely be **Japanese masters Namco and Square**. Well, that's **exactly** what's **happened** with **Ehrgeiz...**



TAKING CONTROL

Cool – a fighting game in which you get to play as characters from *Final Fantasy VII*. And to top it off, it's a collaboration between Square and Namco. What could be better?



quare have always been innovators when it comes to making video games. Not content to follow convention, every one of their titles has strived to break the boundaries of established genres. This has been most noticeable in their fighting games – *Tobal* replaced combos with a grappling system, and *Bushido Blade* attempted

to bring realism to the genre with one-hit kills and fully three dimensional environments. Whatever their successes or failures, you can't help but applaud Square for attempting to break the mould.

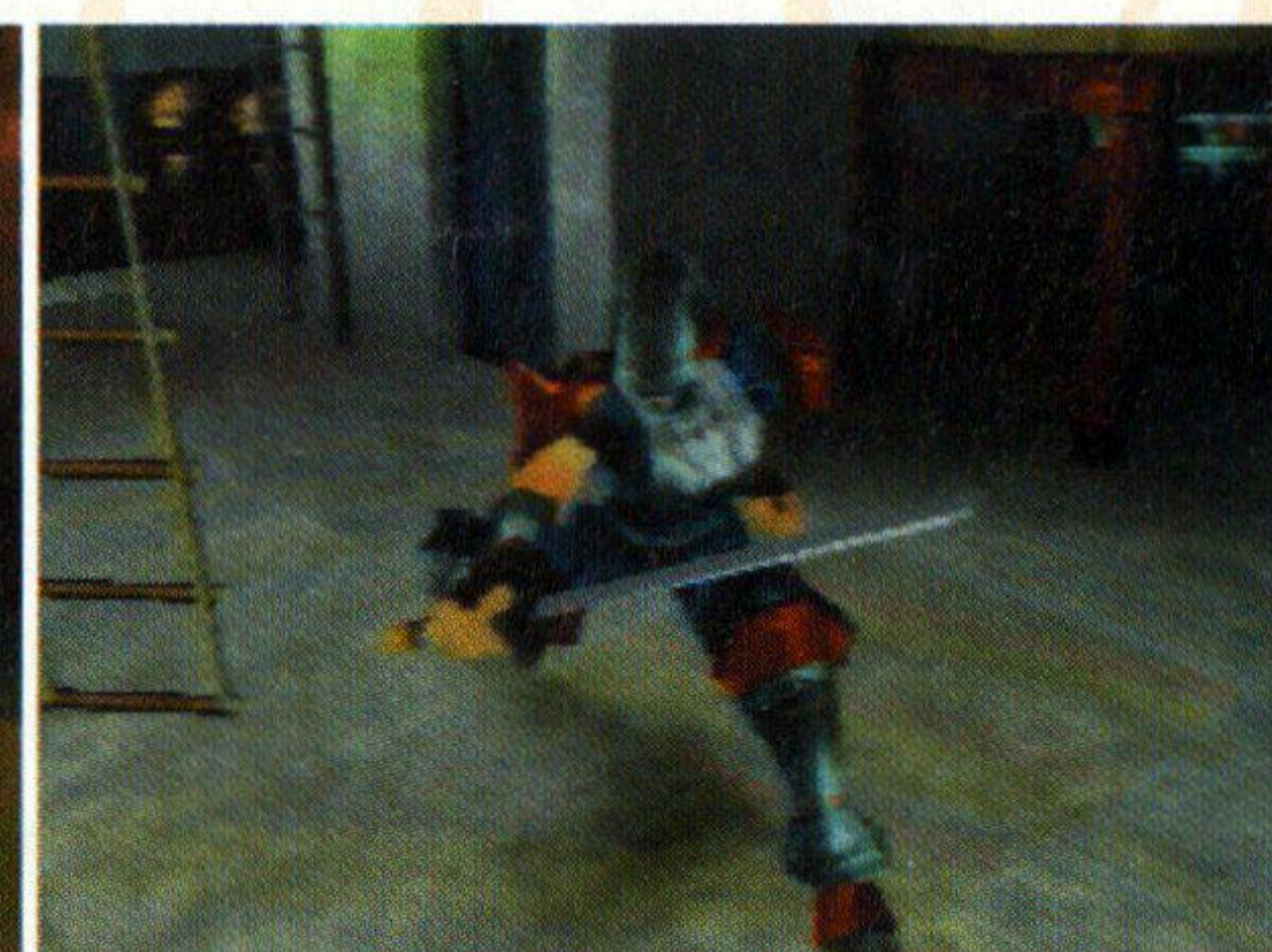
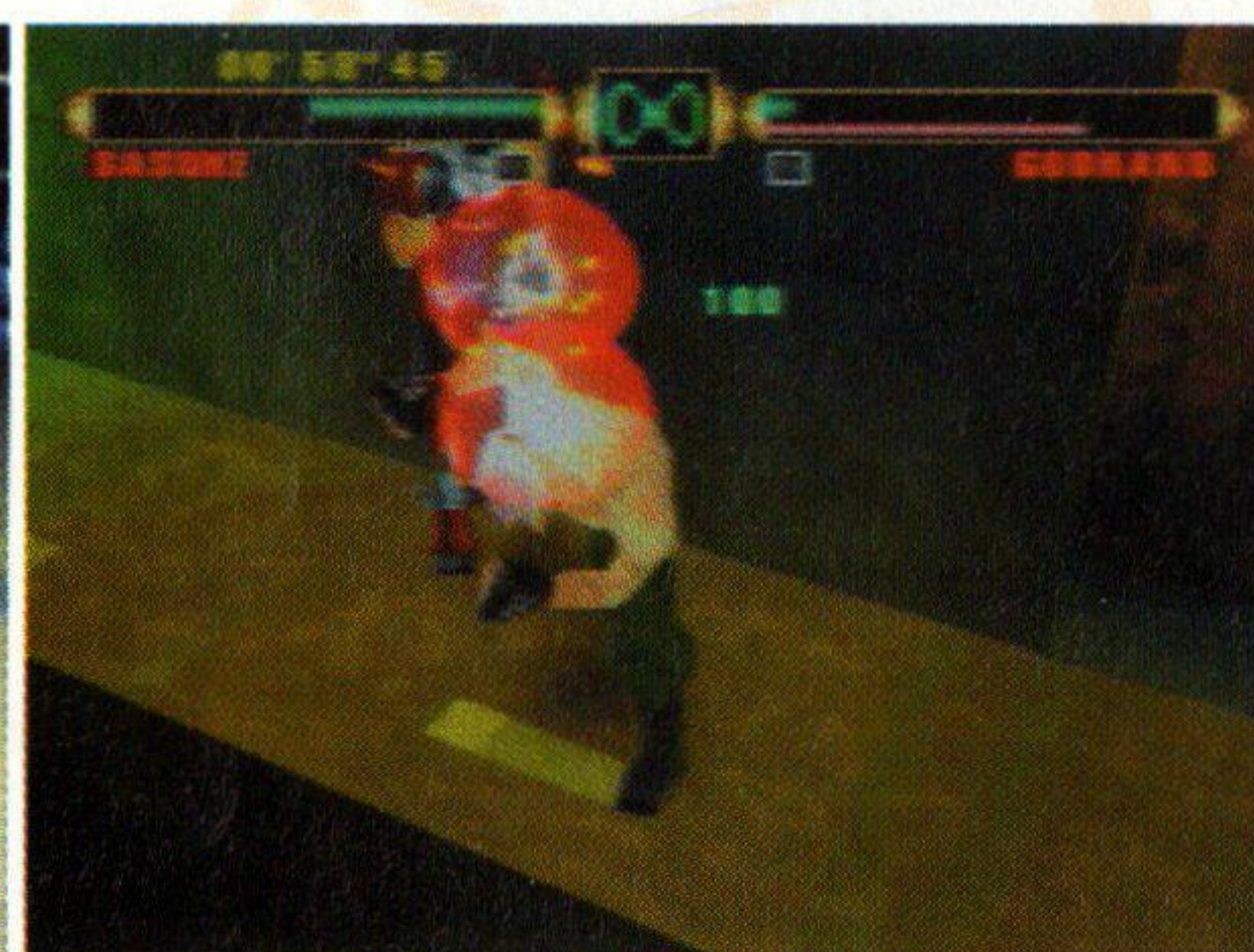
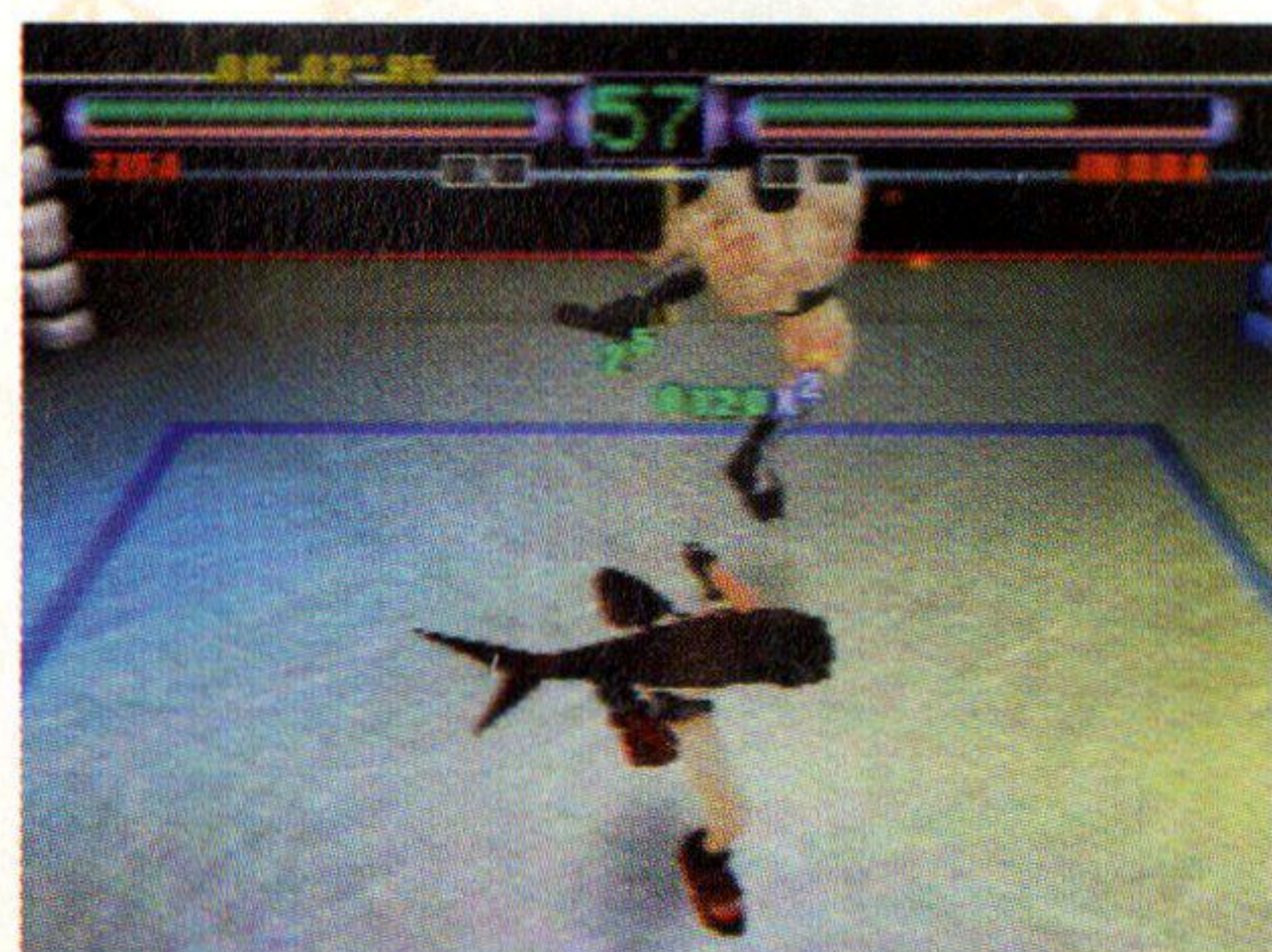
Ehrgeiz is an interesting beast – mainly with regard to the above-mentioned collaboration with arcade masters Namco – which raises the

question: will this game follow the same path of *Bushido Blade* et al, or will it take on an arcade style? The answer is 'yes' to both. *Ehrgeiz* is about halfway between *Tekken* and *Bushido* when it comes to conception; an arcade-style beat-'em-up with elements of freedom.

Because *Ehrgeiz* runs in the PlayStation's high-res mode, it could

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Squaresoft
DEVELOPER	Dreamfactory
STYLE	Beat-'em-up
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	Yes
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block



The fighters in *Ehrgeiz* are incredibly varied ranging from wrestlers and swordsmen to *Final Fantasy* characters and Prince Naseem!

BONUS GAMES

**Infinity Battle**

Basically, a kind of survival mode. The title explains it all – the fights go on forever!

**Battle Runner**

A race against an opponent around a course. This being a fighting game, you get to fight on the way round.

**Battle Beach**

Three sub-games, not unlike *Hyper Sports*. The first is a sprint, second a spring and grab a flag, and the last is hurdles.

**Battle Panel**

Basically, Othello using fighters to turn over the blocks. There are no turns, so the quickest to the squares wins.

quite easily be mistaken for something you'd see on a PC. Well, not quite, but the solidity of arenas and detail of the textures is impressive to say the least. The frame rate is also commendably high. The overall effect is that, in this department, *Ehrgeiz* is the best looking beat-'em-up on the PlayStation, eclipsing even the great *Tekken 3*.

Free thinking, free roaming

Unfortunately, this is where comparisons with that game end, and indeed I'm sure that's where Square would want them to. This game does in no way try to emulate a serious

but here it is implemented in an arcade environment, and as such confines the players in close quarters. Battles can become fairly tactical, and although the different heights don't really play much part in the contact moves, they do give players the opportunity to employ some of the special moves.

Generally speaking, the moves available, while fun to use, are extremely limited and offer nothing of the depth of *Tekken*. All four buttons are used on the pad – high, medium and low attacks, and a special move button. Attack buttons offer a number of combos, and used in conjunction

is a game called *The Godless Quest*, very similar to the dungeon game in *Tobal*, only more extensive. The basic premise of this is to fight your way through randomly generated dungeons, eventually defeating a dungeon boss. This is probably best described as a beat-'em-up/RPG hybrid, but lacks the depth in either of these categories to be judged as one or the other. But hey, it's a bonus game (streets ahead of *Tekken Force*), so what can you expect?

Other bonus games include Infinity Battle (a survival mode), Battle Runner (a fighting race around a track), Battle Beach (beach sports), and Battle Panel (fighting speed Othello). These

serve as nothing more than a distraction from the main game but are good, wholesome fun.

To compare *Ehrgeiz* to *Tekken* would be unfair, and fans of that game will find little here that will occupy them for more than a couple of hours. For the beginner, this game is easy to get to grips with, offers instant gratification, and is a lot of fun. As an idea, *Ehrgeiz* works fine. It has all the trademarks of a Square game, i.e. playability and innovation. Not great, but it goes some way to fill a gap between *Tekken* and *Street Fighter*. **Nick**

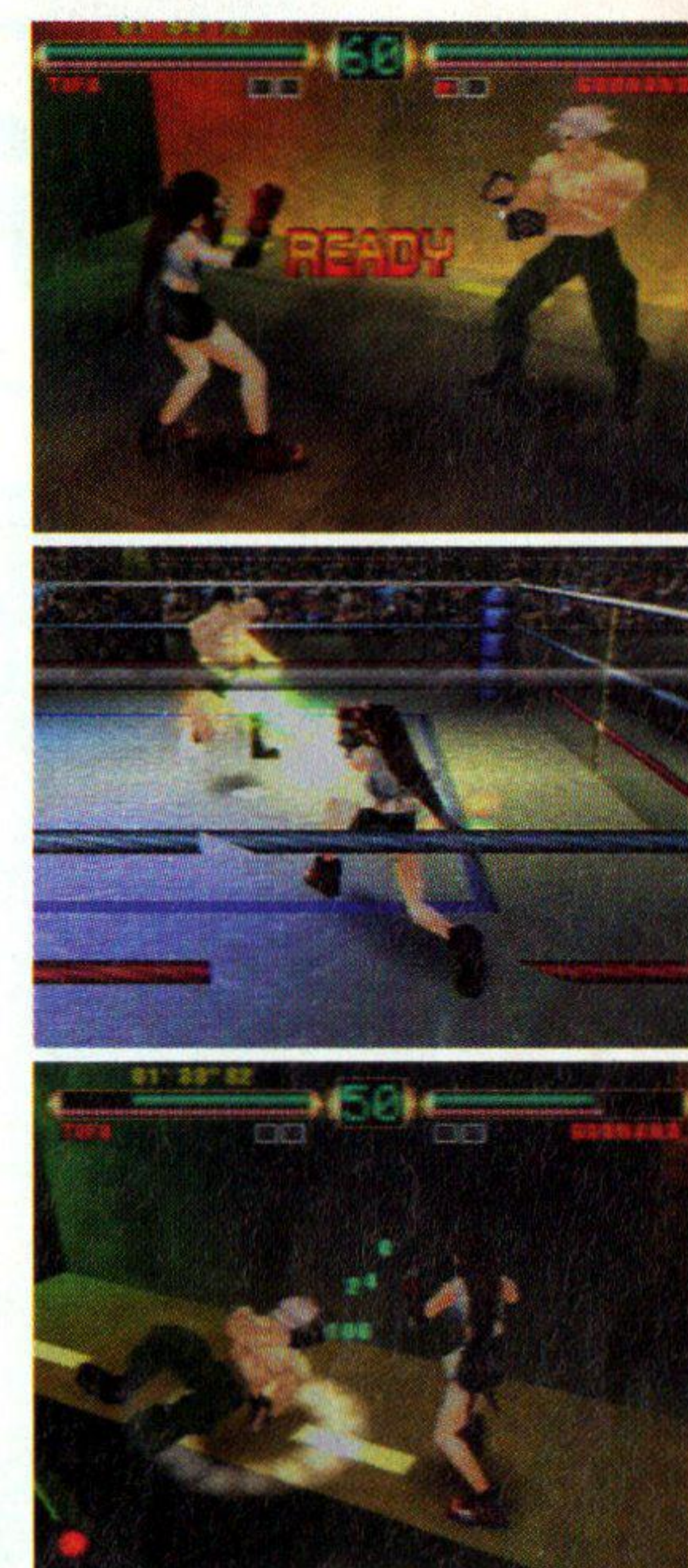
TO COMPARE EHRGEIZ TO TEKKEN WOULD BE UNFAIR, AND DEDICATED FANS OF NAMCO'S GAME WILL FIND LITTLE HERE THAT WILL OCCUPY THEM FOR MORE THAN A COUPLE OF HOURS

fighting game such as *Tekken*. What it does do, however, is throw another hat into the beat-'em-up ring in a similar manner to that in which *Bushido Blade* and *Tobal* did. It presents us with another idea of how a fighting game could be done, and I am sure that some of the elements seen here will feature in future collaborations between Namco and Square, or even in their own individual titles; ideas such as the free roaming, multi-levelled arenas that play a limited but welcome part to the gameplay. The free-roaming idea has been seen before in *Bushido Blade*,

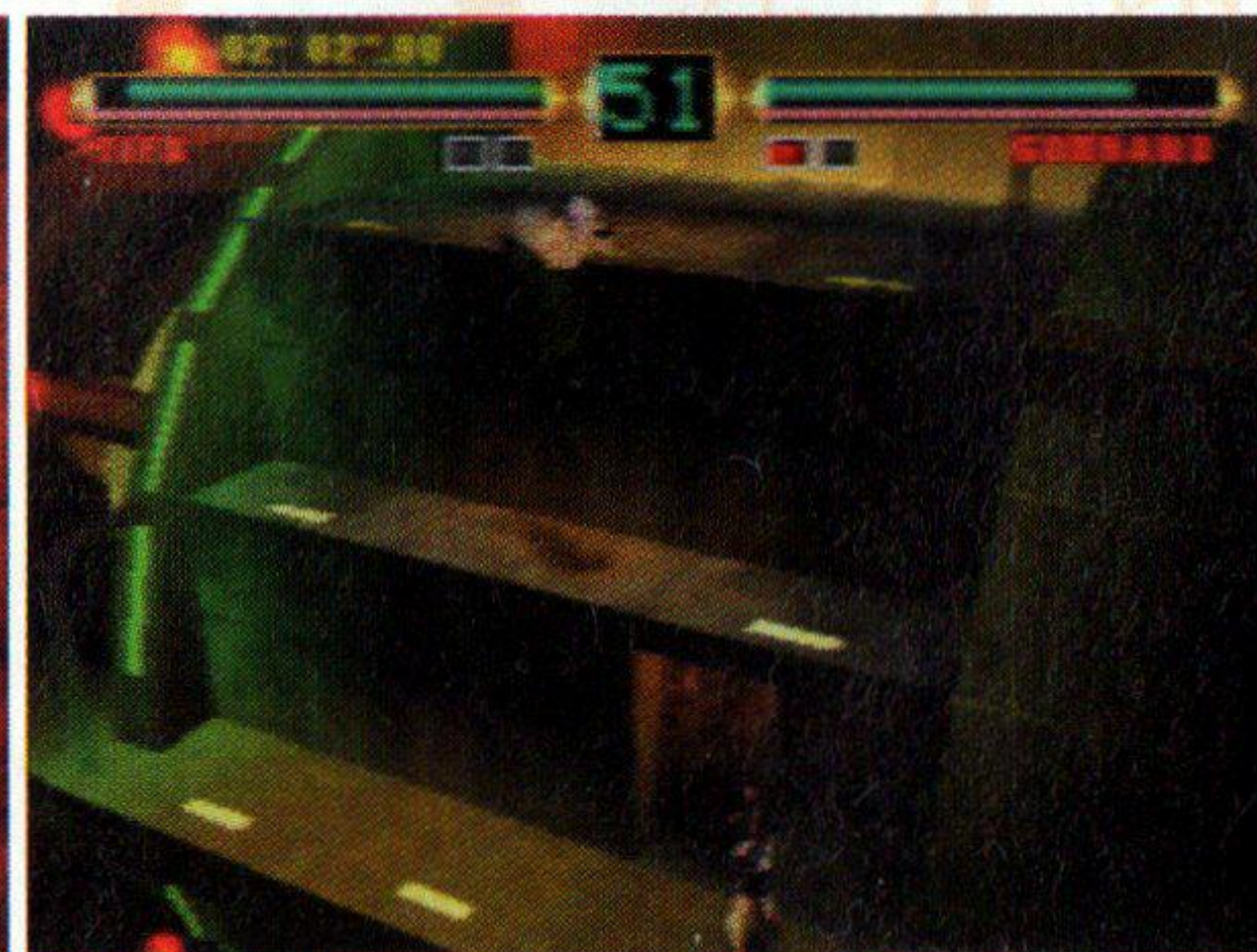
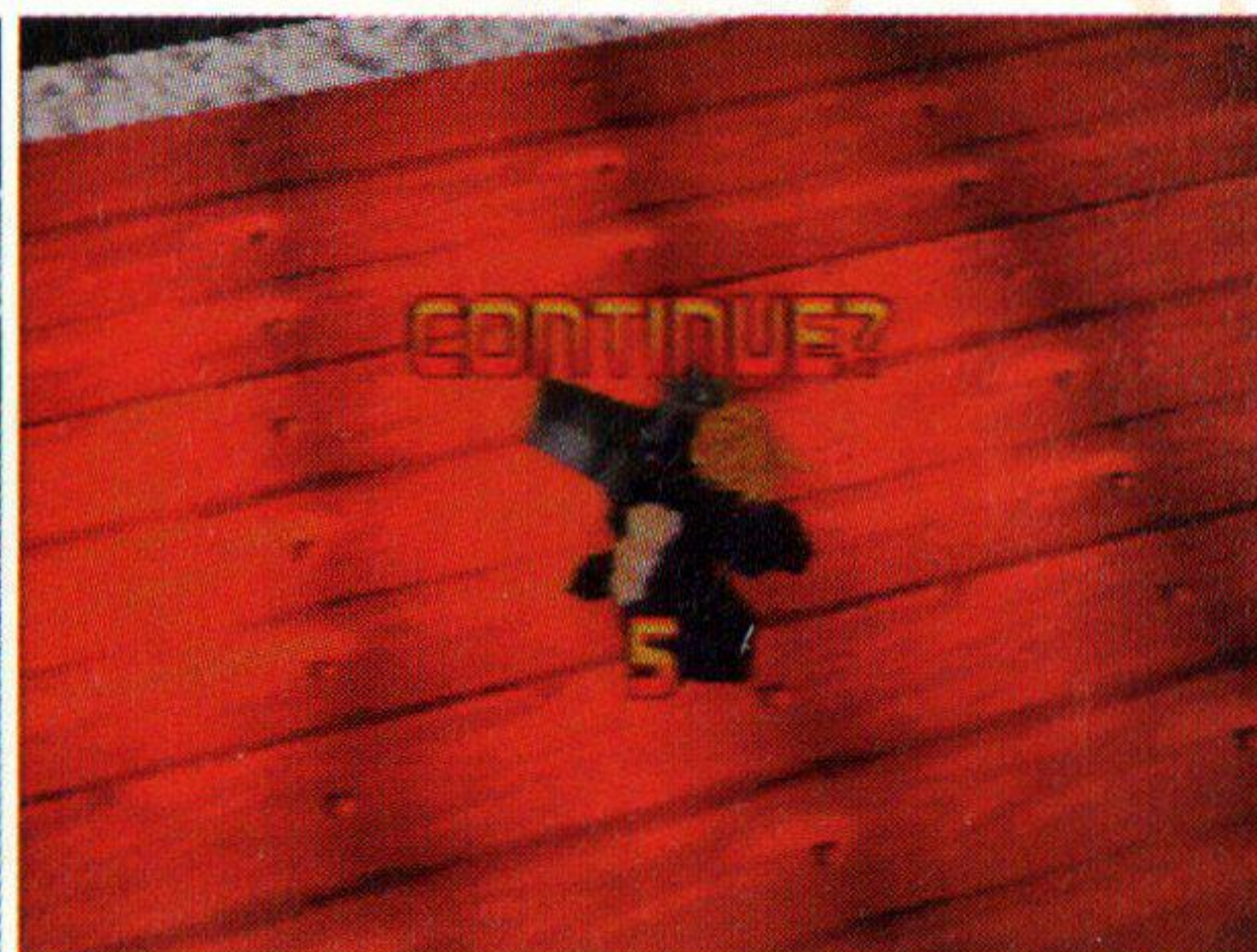
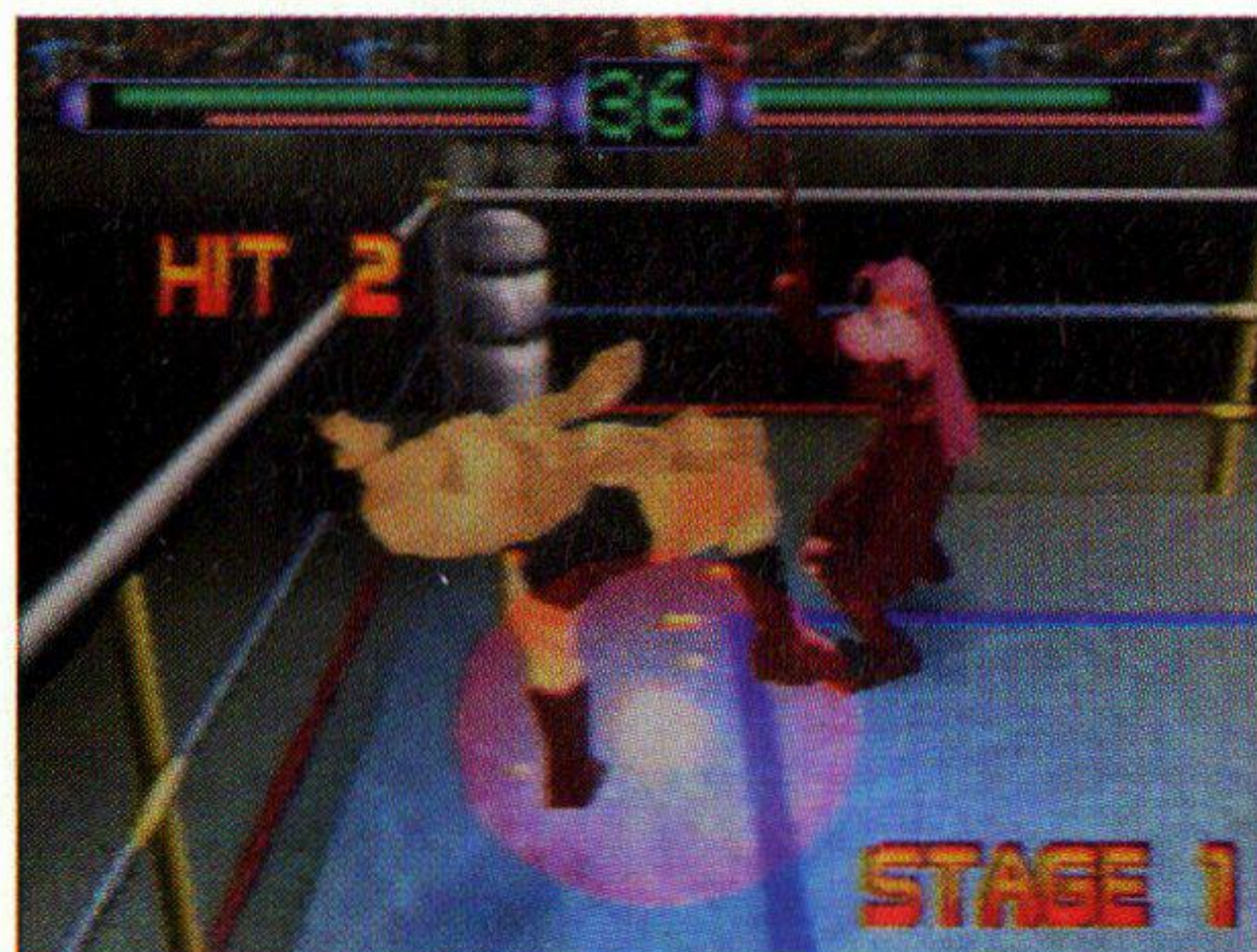
with the jump button (the L1 button) can give you some spectacular attacks. Each of the characters has at least one special move – in the case of Cloud it is to draw his Buster sword. With this drawn you can perform more powerful combos and charge up a Materia-type attack – the meteor shower. All characters have variations on this, and it adds a necessary element to the gameplay.

Dungeon Master

Apart from the main *Ehrgeiz* game, there are also a number of bonus games. The most significant of these



The variety of arenas is to be commended, and almost all feature multiple levels



Ehrgeiz runs in the PlayStation's high-res mode, giving it some of the best looking, most solid graphics on the machine yet.

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ○○○○○

The success of *Final Fantasy VII* on the PC could pave the way for a conversion, but we think it highly unlikely.

N64 ○○○○○

Square don't develop for Nintendo any more, so 'no'.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

Highly unlikely, but with Namco signing to develop for Dreamcast, you never know...

IMPORT
SOFTWARE
SUPPLIED BY:

PLAYGROUND
PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Ehrgeiz
GRAPHICS	85
SOUND	60
PLAYABILITY	75
OVERALL	75
Out of 100	



マリオパーティ



Nothing for two years and then we get **three Mario titles** in the next twelve months – what's going on? Anyway, *Mario Party* is the first of them, and we're about to **find out if it's worth crashing...**



TAKING CONTROL

Oh joy, Mario's back! Playability, charm and loads of wholesome Nintendo fun... or at least that's what we were hoping for. Then we realise that the game is developed by HudsonSoft and not by Nintendo themselves. Not a great start, but we'll see...

INFORMATION

FORMAT	Nintendo 64
PUBLISHER	Nintendo
DEVELOPER	HudsonSoft
STYLE	Board game
RELEASE	Out now
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	1-4
RUMBLE PAK	No
MEMORY PAK	No
MEMORY EXPANSION	No



If you've read our Mario feature this month, then you'll already know that the history of those games has often seen Nintendo take advantage of the selling power of the little plumber and his pals. It's not just for a purely financial reason, though – would *Mario Kart* been half the game that it was (still is?) had it not starred Mario? This much is true – the dependable characters of Mario and friends give a game a higher profile and bring a unique charm to a game that might otherwise be bogged down in mediocrity. This doesn't necessarily apply to *Mario Party* – a board game designed

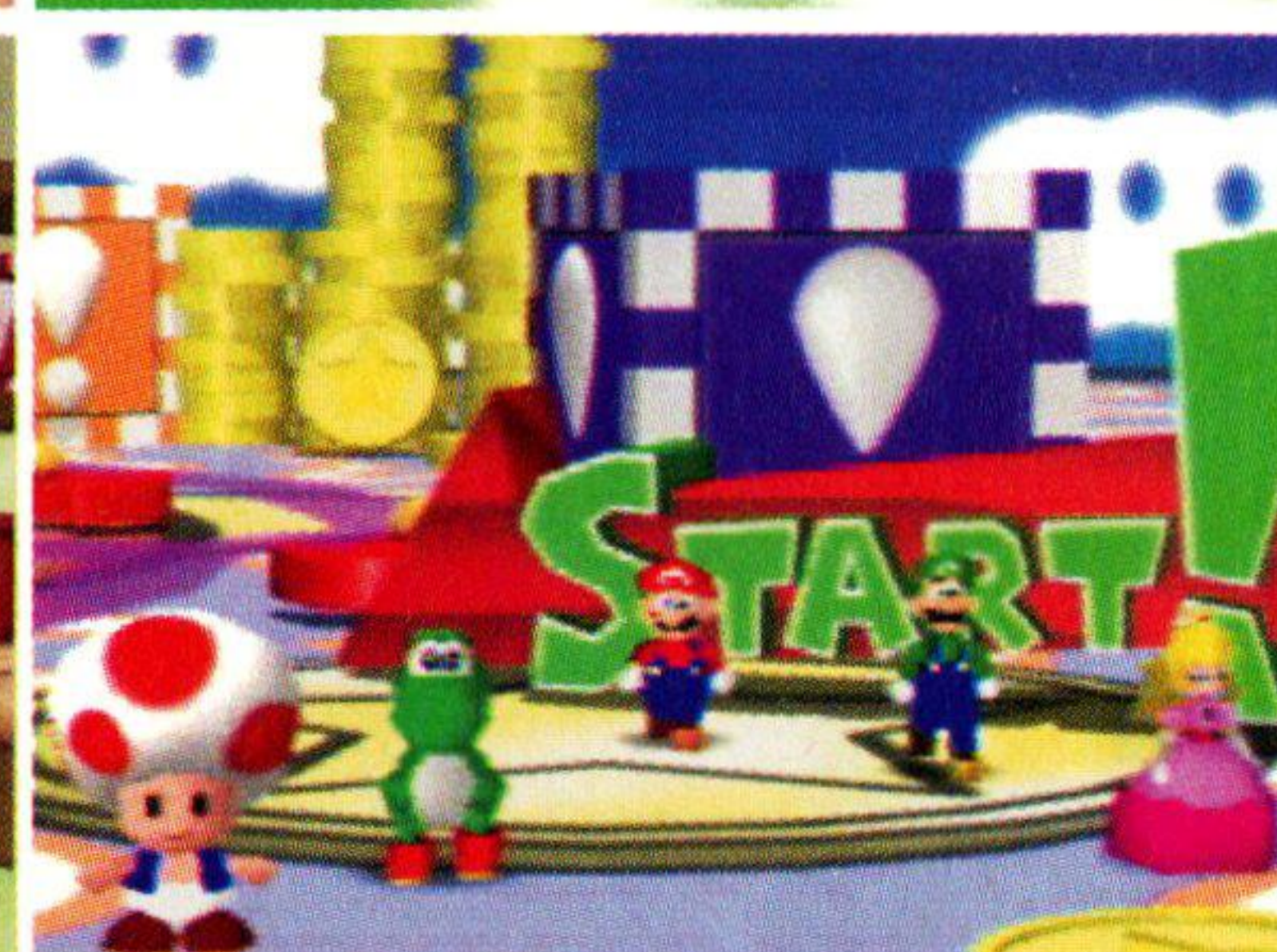
around this famous group of characters and inspired by the long and distinguished Mario series. Surely it can't fail?

Children's party

Mario Party's target audience is obvious from the game's basic premise. Eight of the characters from the Mario games are selectable in this four player game. You then each takes turns to roll the dice and move around the board. Your objective is to collect as many as possible of the gold coins and stars – the winner is the one with the highest totals. This is not all there is to *Mario*

Party, as you might expect from a Nintendo branded game, and the main pulling point is the fact that it features around 50 mini-games.

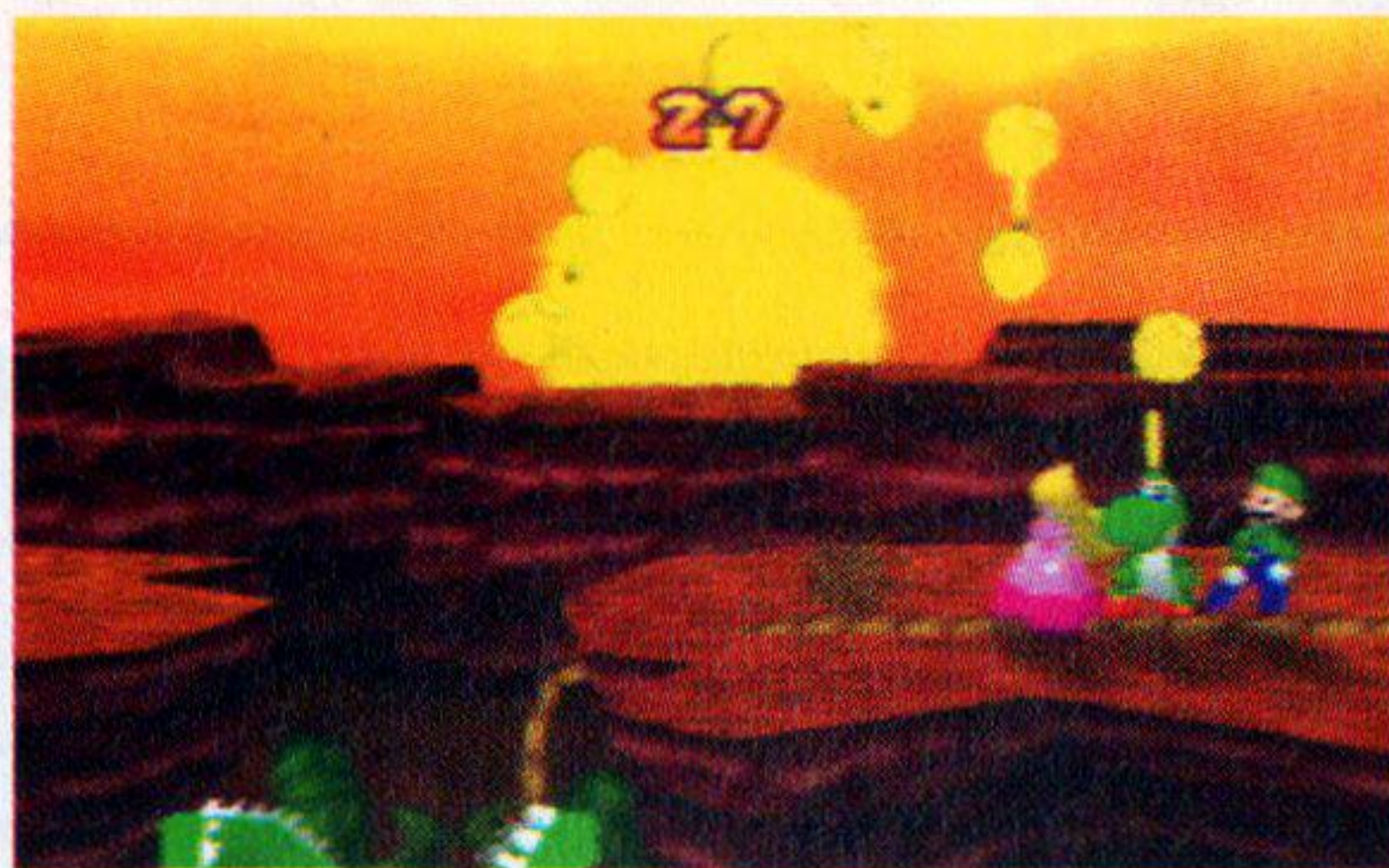
Winning these games is the key to success in *Mario Party*, and they range from the mediocre to the downright surreal. Some are immensely playable, while others become tedious after only a short play. The good ones are a real test of hand-eye co-ordination – painting games and some of the ten pin bowling games spring to mind. The bad ones, however, have little or no imagination and winning them often



It's fairly obvious that HudsonSoft have been give full access to Nintendo's own graphics library. Some of the models and renders have been lifted straight from NCL games

GLORIOUS GAMES?

The main feature to *Mario Party* are the 50 or so mini-games that appear during gameplay. Here is just a taster of what to expect:



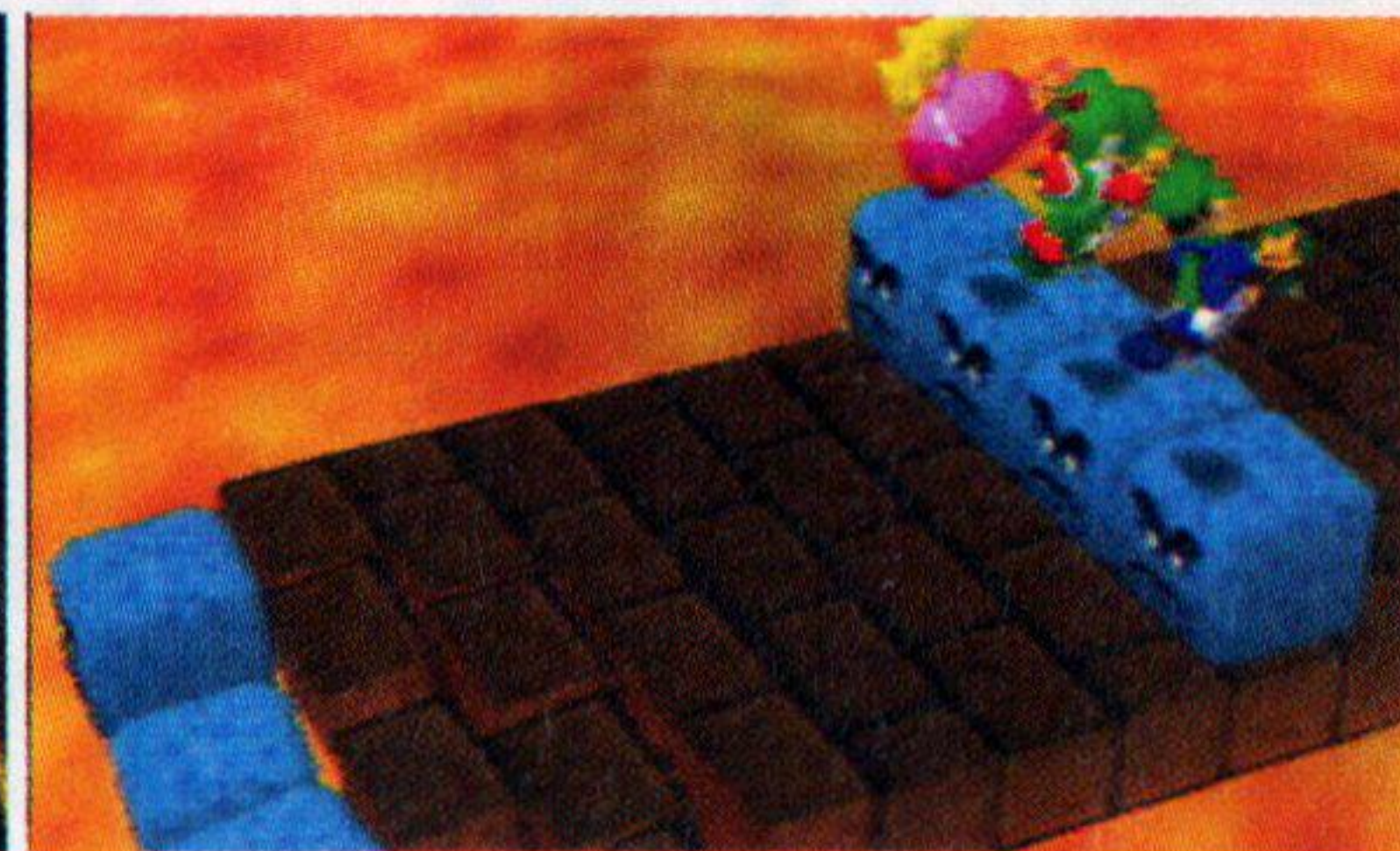
Tug-o-war
It's three against one in an epic battle of strength and rhythm.



Musical Mushrooms
When the music stops, the first one to get to the centre mushroom wins.



Ten pin bowling
One player throws a turtle shell and tries to skittle out the other four.



Skateboarding
All four players on a skateboard trying to escape a disintegrating platform.

owes more to luck than any measure of skill. Unfortunately, the bad games outnumber the good ones with a ratio of about 3:1.

Up to four human players can participate in this simple board game. If you haven't got enough friends then the CPU will take over the remaining players. Woe betide you if you haven't got anyone to play this with, because you are going to get very bored with *Mario Party* very soon. Your attention is only grabbed when it's your turn or momentarily when a four player game comes along. And this is when there are you and three friends playing – add a couple of CPU controlled characters and the game can become frustratingly tedious. *Mario Party* will almost always favour the CPU players in terms of both dice throwing and in the results of the game. Of course it can be quite fun

action; the levels are purely made up of the bonus games. A good way to practice, but then why would you want to?

One of the redeeming qualities of *Mario Party* is that there are a number of themed board areas in which to play the game. These have a fairly significant affect on the gameplay. Levels include a cannon area where players are shot to various different parts when landing on a certain square, and Mario's cloud castle which features multiple routes. But then how much variety can you inject into a board game?

Graphically speaking, *Mario Party* looks like it should have been one of the launch titles for the N64, not a game being released in the most productive period of the N64's life span. It is clear that Hudson have been given access to Nintendo's ageing graphics libraries and have basically



expect from an in-house NCL title. But, then again, it's not an in-house NCL title. Hudson have made a decent

enough stab at making a 'Nintendo-

At end of each mini-game, the coins are added up in a huge pile

THERE WILL BE GAMES PLAYER S WHO WILL FIND ENJOYMENT IN THIS GAME, BUT THEY ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE UNDER NINE-YEARS-OLD, AND UNLESS YOU'RE MARIO MAD, STEER WELL CLEAR OF THIS

becoming worked up about a video game character beating you, but then that's hardly the point of it.

Long in the tooth

There is a certain amount of longevity to be had with the inclusion of a *Super Mario World* inspired level-based game. This does not, however, mean that the game has some classic sideways scrolling

taken models and renders straight from *Mario 64* and *Mario Kart*. However, here the characters are both crudely drawn and crudely animated, and the general presentation of the game leaves a lot to be desired. Basically, this game lacks any of the polish that you would expect.

Ultimately, *Mario Party* falls a long way short of the quality that you'd

esque' game and there are a few decent ideas in here. The problem is that they haven't been realised in a fashion that we've come to expect from a Mario-associated title. There will be games players who will find enjoyment in this game, but they are most likely to be under nine-years-old, and unless you're Mario mad, steer well clear of this. **Nick**

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ○○○○○

Pretty much the same goes for the PC – no Nintendo games.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

Mario appearing on a Sega console?

Play Station ○○○○○

There's never going to be any chance of a Nintendo game being released on the PlayStation, so no.



IMPORT SOFTWARE SUPPLIED BY: **PLAYGROUND PRODUCTIONS**

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Mario Party
GRAPHICS	40
SOUND	50
PLAYABILITY	55
OVERALL	58
Out of 100	



QUANTITY CONTROL

A BUG'S LIFE

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Sony** Developer: **Disney Interactive Studio**
 Style: **3D Platformer** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£49.99**
 Players: **One** Analogue: **Yes** Dual Shock: **Yes** Memory Card: **One Block**

A *Bug's Life* is based on the forthcoming Disney film that looks noticeably similar to the recently released *Antz* movie. It's difficult to judge a good movie tie-in before watching the film, but gameplay-wise this is certainly one of the better conversions.

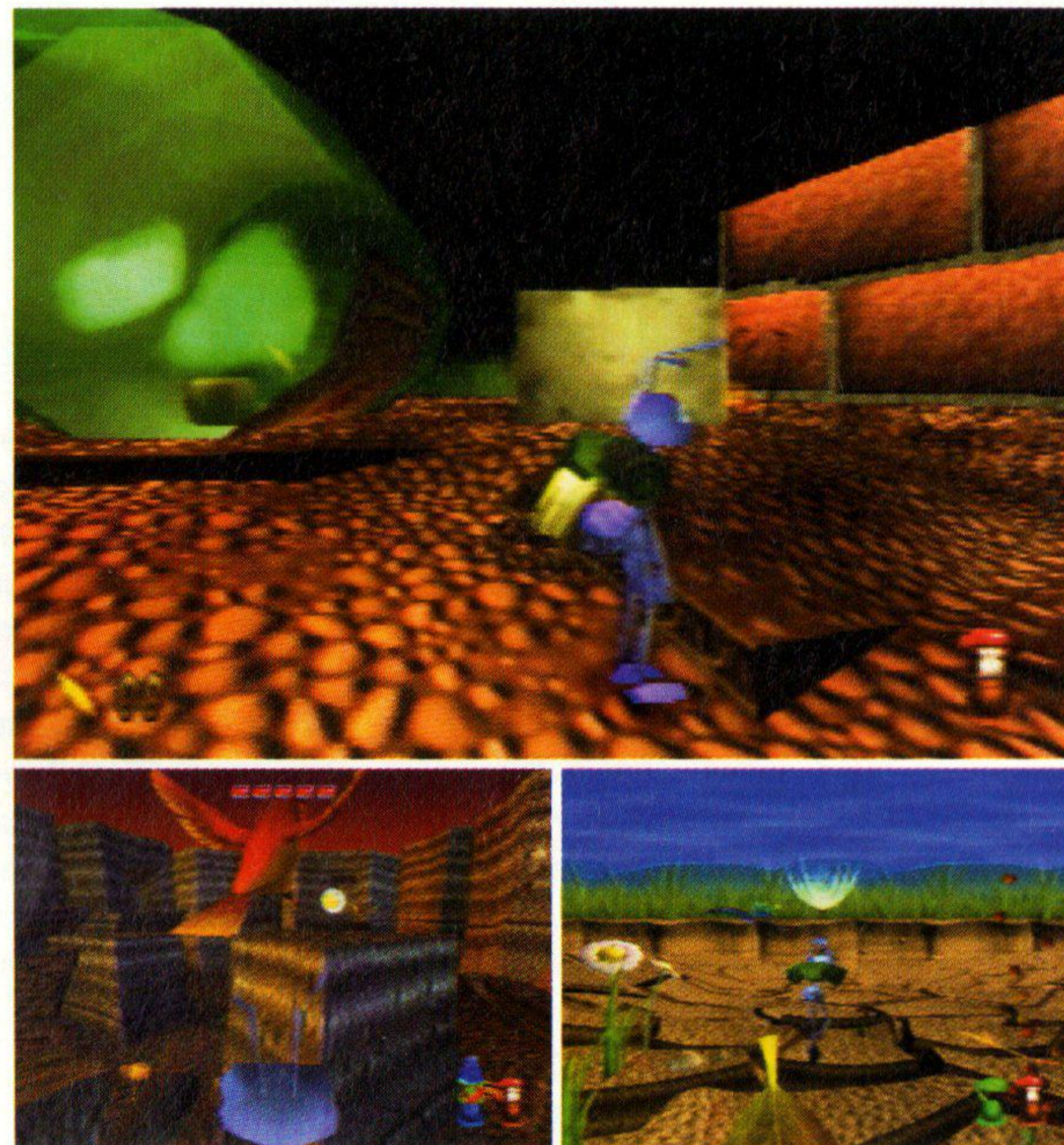
The presentation overall is absolutely superb, with plenty of movie clips, soundbites and music tracks from the film. The in-game graphics are also very impressive, with a spectacular draw distance for the very big game areas. To beat this out of the PlayStation, you'll notice that the game does not draw objects or enemies until they are up close, which is sometimes misleading, but it still beats the old fogging system.

There are several seeds scattered around the level, and by finding special items you can change the type of plant that will grow. Some, like mushrooms, allow you to bounce higher, others act like ladders or dish out power-ups. The seeds themselves can even be powered-up, becoming more effective.

Overall it's a very nice platform game that while having its share of minor faults (problems with the camera etc.) has a very strong appeal, especially for younger games players.

Will

VERDICT: **78%**



HARD EDGE

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Sunsoft** Developer: **Sun Soft** Style: **3D Adventure** Release: **Out Now** Playground Price: **£54.99** Players: **One**
 Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **Yes** Memory Card: **One Block**

It's 2046, and you and your partner are the only survivors of a police SWAT team sent to deal with a group of terrorists who have taken over the Togusa building in downtown Tokyo. You have limited armaments, no communication, and the terrorists are in control of the building. You are on your own.

That is the story which launches *Hard Edge*, a new import game from Sunsoft, the software arm of the giant Sun corporation of Japan. The game plays like a futuristic *Resident Evil*, with robots and mutant monsters instead of zombies. You start the game with two characters, Alex and Michele, in the basement of the besieged building. Your first objective is to rescue a kidnapped scientist from the twenty-sixth floor. Along the way you will pick up another two player characters. All four take different routes through the building, but you can switch control from one to the other at any time.

As the characters progress through the maze of corridors, rooms and doors, there are plenty of enemies to fight, traps to avoid and puzzles to solve. The control interface is easy to figure out, which is just as well, since all the text which would tell you what is going on is in Japanese. This will limit the appeal of the game with regard to a European audience, but with perseverance it is possible to get something from this game. The pre-rendered backgrounds are very good, although the camera angles leave a little to be desired.

Cliff

VERDICT: **67%**



BATTLE TANX

Platform: **N64** Publisher: **3DO** Developer: **Cyclone Studios**
 Style: **Shoot-'em-up** Release: **Out Now** Playground Price: **£59.99** Players: **1-4**
 Rumble Pak: **Yes** Memory Pak: **Yes** Expansion Pak: **Not Supported**

After a deadly virus threatened to wipeout the female half of the world's population, civilisation fell into turmoil as women were rounded up and taken to government controlled quarantine zones. The gang warfare that ensued led to worldwide nuclear strikes. While these successfully wiped out the virus, they destroyed all civilisation and left a huge imbalance in gender. Climbing into a tank you set out towards San Francisco on a quest to find your girlfriend.

You control a tank and drive around a post-nuclear landscape destroying buildings to find weapon power-ups and achieving simple goals such as crossing a bridge or destroying the opposition. Later on in the game, though, as you move into enemy territory. You can then build up an army of other tanks and fight across a huge city for possession of their women. This part of the game is actually very good and plays just like capture the flag.

Battle Tanx may not have the best plot, or the most original game idea, but it can be a lot of fun and has a superbly implemented multiplayer mode that ensures its lastability. **Will**

VERDICT: **73%**



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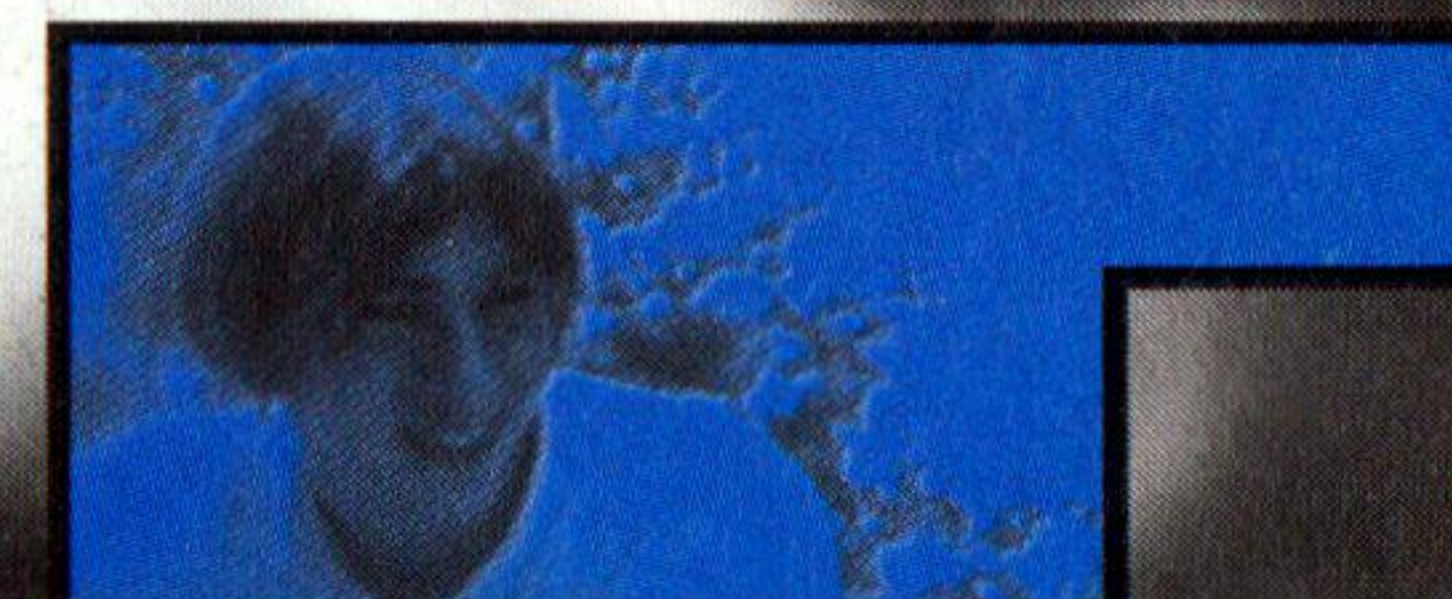
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Out of CONTROL

Another month, another fortune spent on late-night take-aways, and another game of Half-Life anyone? The Total CONTROL Half-Life team is ready for action so if you fancy your chances drop us a line, and make a will.

Name: JUSTIN CALVERT

Position: Editor

My New Year's Resolution is...

To see something of this 'outside world' that I've been hearing so much about. Apparently the graphics and sound are top-notch, but the gameplay is generally dull. I don't know... maybe I'll just stick with *Zelda*, at least that way I won't end up in prison for carrying a weapon and stealing things from people's homes.

The game I'm most looking forward to...

On the PlayStation it would have to be *Gran Turismo 2*, which I personally expect to leave *Ridge Racer 4* standing.

On the Nintendo 64, if I ever finish *Zelda*, I can't wait to play *Perfect Dark*. *Goldeneye* is still one of my favourite games of all time, and the prospect of a sequel has me quite literally dribbling.

I have some space reserved on my PC hard drive for *Kingpin*, but I'm also hoping that I'll be able to squeeze on the likes of *Quake III*, *Galleon* and *Silver* somewhere along the line.

As for the Dreamcast, I'm just looking forward to getting in a collection of games that show what the machine can do and silence the irritating voices of those that seek to dismiss the machine in favour of whatever system they happen to own.

Next month I'm praying for a copy of *Sega Rally 2 Championship* and a Dreamcast steering wheel. I'm also hoping to win the lottery, grow six inches taller and learn Japanese overnight for RPG purposes.

Name: NICK JONES

Position: Deputy Editor

My New Year's Resolution is...

To drink more beer and smoke more tabs.

The game I'm most looking forward to...

Silent Hill, *Final Fantasy VIII*, *Galleon*, *Kingpin*, *Perfect Dark*, *Banjo-Tooie*, *Gran Turismo 2*, *Outcast*, *Jet Force Gemini*, *Shenmue*, *Championship Manager 3*, *Black & White*, *Homeworld*, *Blue Stinger*, *Quake III*, *Aliens Vs Predator*, *Messiah* and *All Star Smash Bros*. Can't choose between any of the above.

Next month Fingers crossed that Sega don't delay *Sega Rally 2* for Dreamcast any further – if you've played the arcade version then you'll know that this should be the best console driving game ever. Well, maybe...

We should also be seeing something of *Kingpin* and *Aliens Vs Predator* as well – including their accomplished multiplayer options. With *Half-Life* network sessions already responsible for some serious deadline stress, we could see the Total CONTROL team go completely insane through sleep deprivation... but not before we get a few deathmatches off first.

Oh, and finally, spending some quality time with my *Sonic Adventure* A-Life, a lovable little critter known to his friends as SilverBoy. Ahh, isn't he cute...

Name: WILL ADKIN

Position: Staff Writer

My New Year's Resolution is...

Giving up smoking and drinking sounds a little bit too easy. For a much bigger challenge I am going to attempt to cure my addiction to *Half-Life*, the game that has been ruining my social life for the past few months. How the craving hurts...

The game I'm most looking forward to...

Goldeneye still ranks as one of the best games of all time, and we've all been eagerly awaiting the arrival of a sequel. *Perfect Dark*, though not a true sequel, is looking like it could blow everything else out of the water when it arrives later this year. With the updated game engine already looking absolutely superb, it's hard to see how Rare could go wrong.

Next month If review code of *Alien Vs Predator* arrives in the office, next month will be more than complete. Having already played the somewhat limited demos of the game, it looks as if this could be the title to replace our afterhours *Half-Life* multiplayer sessions. I'll also be looking out for the arrival of Psygnosis' fantasy adventure, *Drakan*, which is shaping up to be yet another excellent third-person PC game. There are several new Dreamcast titles that will be attempting to put *Sonic Adventure* back in the cupboard as well, namely *Geist Force* and with any luck, *Sega Rally 2 Championship*.

Name: CLIFF SMITH

Position: Senior Staff Writer

My New Year's Resolution is...

I never have much luck with resolutions, but I really ought to get more exercise. Sitting around playing games, then sitting around writing about them, then sitting around in the pub afterwards is doing me no good at all. I'm turning into a game potato.

The game I'm most looking forward to...

Is *Quake III*. I saw a downloaded movie of it today, and it looks totally awesome, with reflective surfaces, refractive glass and realistic smoke. It may be the only thing to compete with *Half-Life* this year.

I'm still waiting for the new first-person shooter *Kingpin* to turn up as well, and *Galleon* should be well worth a look. I'll just have to wait and see.

Next month we're going to be including more fun gadgets in the expanded Hard Stuff section, and not just gaming peripherals either. There's a lot of fun toys out there, and we want to play with them.

We're also hoping to do a big feature on Eidos, one of the biggest games publishers in the world. They have a huge list of brilliant games to their credit, including *Tomb Raider*, *Commandos* and *Flight Unlimited*, and their plans for the future should make for some interesting reading. *Tomb Raider IV*, perhaps?



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